

*by the same author :*

CONDUCTORS' GALLERY

*Biographical sketches of Orchestral Conductors*

THE ROMANCE OF THE ENGLISH THEATRE

*From Shakespeare to Shaw*

MASTERS OF THE KEYBOARD

*The lives of great virtuosi, past and present*

FIVE GREAT FRENCH COMPOSERS

*Berlioz, César Franck, Saint Saëns, Debussy and Ravel*

# COMPOSERS' GALLERY

Biographical Sketches  
of Contemporary  
Composers

by

DONALD BROOK



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# Introductory Note



THIS collection of biographical sketches is offered to the music-lover as a book of general interest and information, and not as a complete survey of contemporary music. A great deal of modern music is mentioned in the following pages, but no attempt has been made to include comprehensive lists of compositions because I have been anxious to avoid giving this book the appearance of a catalogue. Criticisms will be found here and there, chiefly in the form of quotations from recognized authorities because I feel that my own preferences should not be allowed to obtrude.

With the exception of a few minor British composers who have been included simply because they are well-known and of special interest to us in this country, all my biographees are of international reputation. I should like to make it quite clear, however, that the length of each sketch has been determined not by the status of the composer but solely by the amount of biographical information at my disposal which, in my opinion, would be of interest to the general reader. Certain English composers appear as representatives of their particular branch of music: Eric Coates for light music, Dr. Darke for the organist-composers, Roger Quilter for the song-writers, Dr. Gordon Jacob for the composers of film music, and so forth.

I have omitted one or two well-known conductor-composers, Constant Lambert and Julius Harrison for instance, because adequate sketches of them have already been published in my *Conductors' Gallery*.

DONALD BROOK.

London,  
Spring, 1945.



# Sir Granville Bantock



GRANVILLE Bantock, who was born in London on August 7th, 1868, was intended for the Indian Civil Service, and was educated in London for that purpose, but a few lessons with Dr. G. Saunders at Trinity College of Music convinced him that music was the only career in which he would be truly happy, and in 1889 he entered the Royal Academy of Music. He became a pupil of Corder, and was the first holder of the Macfarren scholarship for composition.

Even in his youth he was a prolific composer, and had his Overture to *The Fire-worshippers*, Egyptian suite de ballet from *Rameses II*, and his scena for baritone and orchestra *Wulstan* performed at the Academy while he was still a student there, as well as a concert-version of his one-act opera *Caedmar*, which was afterwards produced at the Olympic Theatre in 1892.

He was a tremendously enterprising young man. With less than fifteen pounds he founded *The New Quarterly Musical Review*, which he edited from 1893 to 1896 with great success. As an organ of musical criticism it won the esteem of some of the greatest men in the profession, and it was remarkably well conducted, but like so many of the other intellectual reviews it encountered financial difficulties, and eventually had to stop publication.

Restless, and keen to gain experience not only of the musical life of other lands but of their people and culture generally, he got a job with an operatic company and toured the world in 1894-5; having already conducted various light operas and musical comedies. Much of his time was spent in America and Australia.

Then he became the musical director at the Tower, New Brighton, and changed the military band into an orchestra. Within a year his programmes of classical and modern music were arousing the interest not only of music-lovers but of thousands to whom music had hitherto meant little. Shortly afterwards he founded the New Brighton Choral Society, and was appointed conductor of the Runcorn Philharmonic Society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century he went to Antwerp



to conduct a concert of British music, and then returned to become principal of the Birmingham and Midland Institute School of Music. In 1901 he received another invitation to visit Antwerp, and went over there to conduct a second concert of British music shortly afterwards.

His acceptance of the appointment at Birmingham came as a surprise to many of his followers, because being one of the most revolutionary characters in British music at that time, he had frequently attacked the unimaginative, academic mentality that was paralysing the work of the various music colleges, and had roundly condemned the examination system upon which they were thriving so comfortably. It soon became evident, however, that he had no intention of submitting to reactionary thought in music, and he proceeded to set a shining example of what could be accomplished by an enlightened regime without destroying that which was of value in the academic life.

In 1908, when Sir Edward Elgar retired from the newly-created chair of music in Birmingham University, Bantock was appointed to succeed him, and held his professorship until 1934, when Victor Hely-Hutchinson went there. Bantock had then officially retired, but it was not long before he discovered that a more or less inactive life at his Buckinghamshire home made no appeal to him, and his election as Vice-chairman of the Corporation of Trinity College, London, gave him a welcome opportunity of continuing his work. He has been round the world twice as a representative of this institution, visiting examination centres in South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, the South Sea Islands, Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus, America and Canada. He has always loved travelling, and has many happy memories of these countries. On one occasion he heard a Zulu in South Africa playing a Mozart sonata from memory.

Now that the examination system has been thoroughly overhauled, Sir Granville is much more sympathetic towards it, for he feels that it has definitely proved its value.

He was on one of his world tours in 1939, and returned to this country only one month before war was declared. Since then, he has been quietly continuing his work at Trinity College, but does no teaching, and has been editing ballets and the classics for various music publishers.

Bantock's magnum opus is his vast setting of Edward Fitzgerald's translation of *Omar Kháyyám* for solo voices, chorus and orchestra. This was completed in 1909, but its first part was

performed at the Birmingham Festival in 1906, the second at the Cardiff Festival in the following year, and the third at Birmingham in the year of its completion. Later it caused a great sensation when the London Choral Society performed it at the Queen's Hall, and in 1912 he was invited to Vienna for its performance in that wonderland of music. *Omar Khayyám*, as one would imagine, is rich in the orientalism that characterizes much of his work.

Smaller, but no less successful, were his delightful *Nine Songs of Sappho* for contralto and orchestra, and his *Songs of the East*, of which there are six sets with piano or orchestral accompaniment.

Several visits to Scotland inspired his beautiful *Hebridean Symphony*, founded partly on traditional music, and first performed in Glasgow in 1916. Ernest Newman, the eminent critic, declared :

"The Symphony contains some wonderfully beautiful transcripts of the emotions imaginative men feel in the lone seas. So clearly has the vision been seen, and so clearly has it been realized, that without any hint to the effect, we should know that it sprang from the sea. At its best it is surely the most beautiful sea music ever written."

Other notable earlier works include his *Dante and Beatrice*, performed at the London Music Festival in 1911 ; a fine setting of Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*, first heard in Manchester in 1912 ; and his remarkable *Vanity of Vanities* (from Ecclesiastes), which aroused great interest in Liverpool in 1914.

The *début* of his *Great God Pan* was delayed by the Great War, but an impressive performance was given at the Sheffield Festival in 1920, and the company at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre were not lacking in initiative when they undertook the production of Bantock's folk-opera *The Seal Woman* in the autumn of 1924. The libretto was supplied by Marjory Kennedy-Fraser.

Mention must also be made of his *Elegiac Poem* and *Sapphic Poem*, both for 'cello and orchestra, and one of his latest works, the *Pagan Symphony*, which was introduced by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in a memorable broadcast under Sir Adrian Boult in 1936.

Granville Bantock was married in 1898 to Helen von Schweitzer and has three sons and one daughter. He was knighted in 1930.

Sir Granville was the first conductor in England to perform the music of Sibelius, who made his first visit to this country at Bantock's invitation for a performance of *Finlandia* at Liverpool.

The two composers became great friends, and Sibelius dedicated his third Symphony to his English host.

In his youth, Bantock was regarded as one of the most advanced composers in the world, and although he is extremely interested in modern music, he has in recent years refused to associate himself with the more revolutionary schools of thought we find in music to-day.

"Modern music is in the melting pot" he assured me when we met for a discussion in London, "the present boom in music seems to be all for the classics: the great bulk of the concert audiences do not seem disposed to listen to contemporary music. The composer of to-day is being neglected simply because he cannot compete with the classics."

"British music has made little progress since Elgar" Sir Granville declared, "and although there is plenty of music being composed to-day, none of it will compare with the works of Delius. I very much doubt whether a lot of the modern foreign music will last long—Schönberg and Honegger, for instance."

Bantock deplotes the average Englishman's lack of interest in the music of his native land. "The Russians want only Russian music, the Germans rarely think highly of anything that is not German, the French specialize in their own music, but over here . . . !"

He thinks it is a pity that the work of such English composers as Stanford, Parry, Mackenzie and Sullivan is passing into obscurity, and especially in the case of Stanford, the BBC might do a little more to perpetuate some of their best compositions. Bantock would not be surprised to see a revival of interest in some of the British composers who are now regarded as unfashionable, and believes that in the future we shall see a much greater enthusiasm for the works of Gustav Holst.

"England is still one of the most backward musical nations" he insists, "our opera is seriously deficient." In Wales, however, he sees great promise if they continue to develop their national love of music, and encourage it in their schools.

"We need a systematic effort to present English music, but I'm afraid it will be a long time before that is done, because the country will be very poor after the war" he told me, explaining that with inflated prices and crippling taxation music is bound to encounter a period of difficulty. "All art is going to find it difficult to exist."

The decline of the Church meant that valuable patronage of

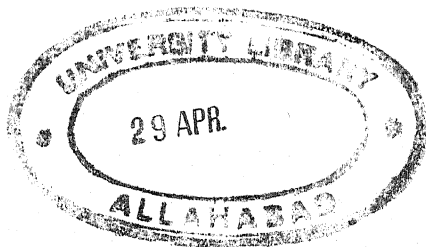
an important branch of English music would disappear, but Sir Granville hoped that every effort would be made to revive such splendid institutions as the Three Choirs Festivals now that the war is over.

Bantock thought it was a pity that so many of our younger composers were making such a fetish of technique, though he had high hopes of Moeran and Lennox Berkeley, to mention only a couple.

He has great admiration for the efforts being made to promote music in the Soviet Union, and although their composers are showing great promise there is a danger that in their desire to create a national idiom in music they will write to a pattern, and become obsessed with modernistic tendencies.

In America he found a tendency among musicians to concentrate upon executive ability to the exclusion of everything else, for he observed an unmistakable impatience with the study of harmony, counterpoint, etc.

Sir Granville has travelled extensively as an adjudicator at competitive festivals, and he believes that just as the Greek Olympic games promoted physical fitness, these festivals encourage a healthy interest in music. The rivalry between choirs in some parts of the country often produced intense excitement, and on more than one occasion he has experienced the greatest of difficulty in coming to a decision.



# Sir Arnold Bax



SIR ARNOLD BAX, Master of the King's Music, was born in 1883 at Streatham, which at that time was rather less of a London suburb than it is to-day. His great love of Ireland, which is reflected in so much of his work, once caused a journalist to presume that he was born in that country, and using a little of the imagination to which certain parts of Fleet Street are apt to resort when cold facts are not available, the literary gentleman rushed into print with a statement that Bax was born on an island in the middle of a bog-lake in County Mayo. There is, of course, a good deal of Irish blood in Sir Arnold's veins, and nothing would have pleased him more if the journalist's statement had been true.

As a child he showed amazing ability at the piano : he seemed to be able to read music instinctively at sight. His first acquaintance with orchestral music was made when his father began taking him to the Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts, and it is not surprising to learn that within a week or so he was making insistent demands to learn to play the violin as well. He made rapid progress on both instruments, and when the family moved to Hampstead in 1896, he took lessons from an Italian ex-bandmaster.

He wrote his first sonata at the age of twelve, and in the ensuing years composed with such ardour that when he was fourteen his father, slightly bewildered at his son's musical effusions, took him to Westminster to consult Sir Frederick Bridge upon the advisability of his adopting music as a career.

"Do you assure me, Sir Frederick, that my son really has this musical taint in his system?"

"I fear that I cannot hide it from you, sir, that such is indeed the case. That will be three guineas, thank you, and mind the step."

So Bax went to an institution known as the Hampstead Conservatoire to study the piano, harmony and composition under a local organist, but in 1900 proceeded to the Royal Academy of Music, where his fellow students were Stanley Marchant (now the Principal), B. J. Dale, Adam Carse, Eric Coates, Harry Farjeon, W. H. Read and York Bowen. Myra Hess and Irene Scharrer

were also there at that time, and in his autobiography, Bax says that he remembers them as "very small and eternally giggling girls."

Bax was undoubtedly one of the most brilliant students the Academy had ever known. He could play an orchestral score at sight on the piano with an ease that staggered his professors, and it is thought that this has always made it difficult for him to appreciate the complexity of much of his own work. Tobias Matthay took him for the piano, and Frederick Corder for composition.

Unlike most composers, Sir Arnold steadfastly refuses to conduct his own works. The origin of this attitude may be traced back to his student days when he won the Charles Lucas Medal with a set of symphonic variations. Frederick Corder arranged for these to be performed at a concert to be held at the Royal College of Music, and allowed C. V. Stanford to persuade Bax to conduct them. He acquiesced, although he knew nothing of the art of conducting. At the end of the performance he resolved never again to take up the baton.

By the time he left the Royal Academy of Music in 1905 he had written a substantial number of works, but most of them had to be revised or withdrawn in later years because the elaborations of their texture were excessive.

Bax became a very fine pianist, but rarely, if ever, played in public. He travelled for years not only in Germany, where every young musician tried to make his musical pilgrimages, but also in Russia, a country which impressed him sufficiently to leave its mark upon several of his works. His experiences there produced three short works: *May Night in the Ukraine*, *Gopak* and *In a Vodka Shop*.

For many years Arnold Bax was engaged in a long struggle for recognition. He was of course fortunate in possessing private means, so that he was never under any obligation to earn money, or indeed, to consider the financial aspect of his various musical activities. There is no doubt that he could have demanded high fees as a pianist had he been inclined to perform in public, but he never sought musical appointments of any kind, believing that they should be left for those who were obliged to seek a livelihood in music.

His Symphony No. 1 was first performed in London on December 4th 1922 by Albert Coates, and was described by Nicholas Slonimsky as "a work of gloomy introspection with overtones of

mystical contemplation." It was also performed at the Festival held by the International Society for Contemporary Music in Prague in the summer of 1924. The same Society's Supplementary Festival at Salzburg two months later gave the critics their first opportunity of hearing Bax's Viola Sonata.

The *première* of his Second Symphony took place in America on December 19th 1929, when it was played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky. Writing to Philip Hale about it, Bax said that it should be "very broad indeed, with a kind of oppressive catastrophic mood."

The sombre Third Symphony followed on March 14th 1930 under the conductorship of Sir Henry Wood; the Fourth Symphony was first performed by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra under Basil Cameron on March 16th 1932; the Fifth received its initial performance by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Thomas Beecham on January 15th 1934; and the Sixth, dedicated to Sir Adrian Boult, was first heard at a Philharmonic Concert conducted by Sir Hamilton Harty on November 21st 1935. Sir Arnold's Seventh Symphony, the last up to the time of writing, was conducted by Sir Adrian Boult at the New York World's Fair in 1939 and first heard in England on June 21st 1940. One of Bax's latest works is his String Quartet in G, which possesses a very beautiful slow movement. In recent years he has also written occasionally for the films.

His most popular works are the symphonic poem *The Garden of Fand*, and that fascinating orchestral work *Tintagel*, but I have good reason for believing that in the years to come we shall hear more frequent performances of many of his other compositions for the orchestra, including the *Overture to Adventure*, *Overture to a Picaresque Comedy*, *Rogues' Comedy Overture*, *Summer Music*, *The Happy Forest*, *The Tale the Pine Trees Knew*, *Two Northern Ballads*, the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, and *London Pageant*, a march and trio dedicated to the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and written for the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

Sir Arnold's chamber music is also of considerable importance, and his compositions for the piano, despite the difficulty of most of them, appeal strongly to those who can play them, because of their richness in colour.

Bax is undoubtedly a master of melody and intricate rhythm, but his works demand very close attention. His symphonies even more than his other orchestral works, are proof of their creator's

brilliant technique and remarkable creative power. Robin Hull says of them :

"The meditative, deeply penetrating character of Bax's invention ranges from the starkest ferocity to idyllic enchantment. His wealth of romantic beauty is interwoven with much keener austerities, and tinged by more remorseless sentiments than any usually associated with romance. He reveals an incomparable mastery of orchestral colour in music which strikes to a depth unattainable by impressionism . . . The nature of his strongly individual style, which attempts no compromise with past or present fashions, receives scant illumination by direct contrast with that of other composers ; nor can his mature works be profitably compared with any except those which he himself has written."

Owing to its complexity of structure and rhythm, Bax's work is often difficult to appreciate on its first hearing. It is unrestrained and yet refined, and more often than not we find that he has deliberately chosen to depict the more sombre aspects of life.

Sir Arnold wrote an article in *Musical America* some years ago in which he confessed that he was a "brazen romantic" and explained that by this he meant that his music is "the expression of emotional states." He added that he is not interested in sound for its own sake or in any modernist "isms" or factions.

He is of a quiet and retiring nature, and prefers to live unobtrusively in a little Sussex village not very far from London. His brother, Clifford Bax, is the well-known poet and dramatist, by the way. Sir Arnold was knighted in 1937, and four years later became Master of the King's Music after the death of Sir Walford Davies. He has received honorary degrees of Doctor of Music from the Universities of Oxford (1934) and Durham (1935).



# Lennox Berkeley



LENNOX BERKELEY, I feel, is something of an enigma, and one cannot help wondering what place he will take in modern English music in the years to come. He was born at Boar's Hill, Oxford, on May 12th 1903, and there is nothing of unusual musical interest in the details of his childhood. His parents possessed no musical ability, but his father, a naval officer, was sufficiently interested in the art to buy a pianola and an enormous library of rolls. It was by this mechanical means that Berkeley's interest in music was aroused during his early childhood.

At Gresham's School, Holt, and St. George's School, Harpenden, he learned to play the piano, but when he proceeded to Merton College, Oxford, he had no intention of making music his profession. He had only the vaguest ideas concerning his future career. He read modern languages, took his B.A., coxed the Eight, and so forth; in fact, his University career was of the pleasantly conventional type enjoyed by the sons of those in comfortable circumstances. Music was an agreeable spare time activity—taken rather seriously, it is true—but it was not until he came down from Oxford in 1926 that he entertained the idea of making it his career. Then, however, the urge to devote himself entirely to the art impressed itself, and he went to Paris for six years to study with Nadia Boulanger.

Residence in Paris brought him wonderful opportunities of enjoying the company of the sort of people whose companionship, in small doses, can be an exhilarating stimulus to any artist intent upon finding his own soul and expressing it in his own way. His studies of counterpoint, fugue and orchestration were done in the congenial company of such dynamic young men as Aaron Copland and Roy Harris, whom we shall meet later in this book. Then there were occasional meetings with composers who had already established themselves or at least made a stir among the critics: Poulenc and Honegger, for instance; and with the two who exerted a dominating influence upon his development as a student, Maurice Ravel and Igor Stravinsky.

Lennox Berkeley admits that he owes much to Ravel; he

knew him quite well, and received from him advice that has proved of great value in more recent years. The eminent composer was always extremely kind, and most willing to scrutinize and comment upon Berkeley's early works—chiefly compositions of an immature nature which he has now withdrawn. Ravel, he tells me, was always very strict on technical efficiency, and thought that most of the young people trying to compose at that time were too amateurish—too keen to dabble in music without troubling to master its technicalities. Incidentally, Nadia Boulanger was always most insistent that her pupils should have a thorough grounding in the classics before attempting to write on modern lines.

Berkeley also acknowledges with gratitude the guidance he received from Stravinsky, whose acquaintance he enjoyed during the latter part of his Parisian days, so that this composer's influence came rather later than that of Ravel. He is a great admirer of Stravinsky's works—some more than others, of course—and strongly disagrees with the little group of critics who ridicule the superficiality of them. Few composers, he feels, have been more completely misunderstood than Stravinsky.

When he left Paris he was obliged to take his invalid mother to the Riviera for a period of two years, and it was during this time that he drew attention to himself as a composer with his Violin Sonata (1933), a work more mature and original than anything he had hitherto produced. At about that time, too, his Oratorio *Jonah* was written, a more ambitious effort first performed at a BBC concert of contemporary music in 1936 and repeated at the Leeds Festival in 1937. The influence of Stravinsky is apparent in this work, and that perhaps explains why the English listener, rather a conservative fellow when it comes to oratorio, found it difficult to appreciate. Describing the Leeds performance in the *Musical Times* Herbert Thompson wrote :

"It is a work almost aggressively modernistic in character, and is not easily followed by those who have been accustomed to regard emotion as an essential characteristic in music. For this quality, pattern alone is an inadequate substitute, and though one may somewhat regretfully realize that, as the Romantic period has had a long innings, the wave of fashion is bound to bring along something very different in its wake, one is none the less inclined to wonder whether this intellectual music is likely to retain a place in history. If so, it implies a revolution in aesthetics."

Berkeley had a suite of Catalan dances, *Mont Juic*, accepted for the festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music at Barcelona in 1936, and it was there that he first met Benjamin Britten. The two young composers found much in common and have been great friends ever since.

One of Berkeley's best efforts is the music he wrote to Frederick Ashton's ballet *The Judgement of Paris*, which was produced at Sadler's Wells in the early summer of 1938. Shortly afterwards his setting of the psalm *Domini est terra* was given its *première* at an I.S.C.M. Festival and repeated in September 1938 at the Gloucester Festival.

Since 1935 Berkeley has resided in England, though before the outbreak of the Second World War he made frequent visits to Paris. He at present holds a position on the BBC Music Staff, to which he was appointed in 1942. Due perhaps to his French training, he is a great believer in clarity and economy in composition, and dislikes the dry intellectual style one finds in what is commonly called "composer's music," although in my opinion some of his own works have a strong tendency in that direction. His Symphony, for instance, which was first performed at a Promenade concert in 1943, and which is undoubtedly one of the most important of his recent works, is an interesting but rather discordant effort which abounds with intellectual chatter, entertaining though it may be. Rather more effective are his various piano works, for his percussive style seems more at home on the keyboard.

Lennox Berkeley has a deep love for the classics, and believes that one's form and technique should always be based on that of the great masters. Mozart is his "model" composer. He is interested in film music, and has written for two productions himself: *Hotel Reserve* (1944), and *Out of Chaos*, a documentary film about the lives of the war artists, made in the same year.

Among other recent works we find his *Serenade* for string orchestra, first performed by the Boyd Neel ensemble in 1940; *Sonatina* for violin and piano, composed for Max Rostal in 1942; a String Trio, written for the Grinke ensemble in 1943; *Divertimento* for orchestra, commissioned by the BBC (1943); the Piano Sonata (1945); and the *Sonatina* for viola and piano written for Watson Forbes in the same year.

# Arthur Bliss



ARTHUR BLISS, who was born in London on August 2nd 1891, is of American descent, his father being the first member of the family to leave New England to come and settle in this country. His mother was a fine amateur pianist, and his brothers were all sufficiently accomplished instrumentalists to be able to join in the playing of chamber music at home. Arthur Bliss's earliest works were all written for performance by members of his own family : a fact which accounts for the unusual combination of instruments he employed. His first composition, for instance, was for clarinet, 'cello, piano and drum !

He was educated at Rugby, and while he was there he continued to write chamber music for whatever instruments his friends happened to be able to play. He also acquired a reputation at school as a solo pianist. Proceeding to Cambridge, where he took degrees in arts and music, he became a prominent figure in the University musical circles.

Bliss went to the Royal College of Music in 1912 and studied composition under Stanford, Vaughan Williams and Holst, but as soon as war broke out he enlisted as a private, and being rather less fortunate than those musicians who were able to practise their art in the army, he was obliged to give up all musical activity. After a while he was commissioned in the 13th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers and went to France. He was wounded in the battle of the Somme in 1916 and was brought back to England to undertake the instruction of cadets, but it was not long before he became restless and effected his transfer to the 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, with whom he again went to France. After several heavy engagements with the enemy, during which he was mentioned in despatches, he was gassed at Cambrai in 1918, and was still in hospital when the armistice was signed.

While he was in the army, two of his earlier works were performed at home : his String Quartet in A and his Piano Quintet in A minor. Both had the merit of great originality, but when he returned to civilian life, he recognized their immaturity and withdrew both from publication.

As soon as he was able to discard his uniform he started working in earnest. His pent-up desire to compose and his conviction that all the old methods were changing made him decide against taking a further course of academic instruction, and the result was that he soon developed a unique style which brought him into the front rank of the more unconventional modern composers.

One of the first of his post-war works was *Madam Noy*, a song for soprano with flute, clarinet, bassoon, viola, harp and bass, which was first performed in 1920. In October of the same year his *Rhapsody* for soprano and tenor voices, flute, cor anglais, string quartet and bass was first heard; a work in which the voices are used as instruments in the ensemble, as there are no words. It was published by the Carnegie Trust and received its second performance at Salzburg under the auspices of the International Society for Contemporary Music in 1923.

*Rout*, for soprano and chamber orchestra, was another of his early post-war works that drew attention to him as a writer of refreshingly original, vigorous music. It was later re-scored for full orchestra.

In 1921 he accepted a professorship at the Royal College of Music, but the work of teaching composition to students made no great appeal to him at that time, and being financially independent, he resigned in the following year. Then in 1923 he went for a prolonged visit to America, and settled for a while in California, where he did a great deal of lecturing, conducting and composing. While he was there he married an American, Miss Gertrude Hoffman of Boston, whose father was the Curator of the Natural History Museum at Santa Barbara. They have two daughters, Barbara, who is studying drama, and Karen, who is learning classical ballet.

Between the two world wars, Bliss travelled considerably, and had the pleasure of hearing many performances of his own works abroad. At Amsterdam, for instance, his *Hymn to Apollo* made a considerable impression some months before it was first heard in London. His *Introduction and Allegro* was first performed in Philadelphia in 1927 under the baton of Stokowsky, to whom it is dedicated; and Mrs. Elizabeth Coolidge, an eminent patroness of music, commissioned his *Oboe Quartet*, an interesting composition which was first heard in Venice in 1927.

At the Norwich Festival in 1930, Bliss introduced his famous *Morning Heroes*, a symphonic work for orator, chorus and orchestra

dedicated to the memory of his brother Francis Kennard Bliss and all other comrades killed in battle.

Sir Adrian Boult conducted the first performance of his *Music for Strings* in a programme of English music at the Salzburg Festival in 1935, and it was in that year that Bliss became associated with the film industry. Who does not remember the virile, thrilling music that to no small extent was responsible for the tremendous success of *Things to Come*? This film, based on the famous book by H. G. Wells, did much to make composers aware of the possibilities of writing for the screen, and suites adapted from its music were soon being played in the programmes of the leading symphony orchestras all over the world. Two years later Bliss wrote the music for the film *The Conquest of the Air*.

One of the most effective of his more recent works is the ballet *Checkmate*, which was composed for the Paris Exhibition, and first produced by the Vic-Wells Company at the Theatre des Champs-Élysées in the summer of 1937 with choreography by Ninette de Valois. It was brought to London in the following autumn and staged at Sadler's Wells.

His fine Piano Concerto was written for the New York World Fair in 1939, and was first performed there under the direction of Sir Adrian Boult with Solomon as the soloist. At the time of writing, the latest works by Arthur Bliss are a String Quartet and a most vivid ballet called *Miracle in the Gorbals*.

He was in California when the second world war broke out, and in 1940 accepted a professorship there at the university, but in the following year he returned to England to become the Overseas Director of Music for the BBC. Within twelve months he became the Corporation's chief Director of Music, a position which he held until the end of March 1944. Referring to his period of office, the *Radio Times* declared recently :

"During these years a vigorous clear-cut policy has always been readily recognisable in Home and Overseas broadcasting of music. Marked attention has been given to British music and music of the United Nations ; and striking contemporary works have been accorded their place by the side of classics familiar and unfamiliar."

When I discussed this book with Arthur Bliss, one of the most interesting facts I learnt was that in his opinion there seem to be an incredible number of young composers in this country to-day striving for recognition ; apparently more so in Britain than in any other country in the world. "The real creative talent seems to be

in England to-day" he declared. "We have no 'school' of composers at the present time, but a very large number of individual creative artists."

Bliss told me that the BBC welcomed this host of young composers, and did its best to encourage them; in fact, but for the opportunities provided by the programmes of broadcast music, very few compositions of the younger contemporary writers would ever get performed at all, because there were extremely few concert promoters who would dare to include the work of unknown composers in their programmes to-day.

"A vast number of young composers show promise at the present time, and one of our greatest difficulties is to sort out the thousands and thousands of manuscripts that are forever being sent to the BBC. The Corporation employs a panel of composers to go through them, and I can assure you that nothing is overlooked. Every score sent to the BBC takes weeks to judge properly, but it is done with the greatest care. Of course, the bulk of these efforts never get performed, because few show real genius."

I asked Bliss if he thought that the State should give grants to young composers who show real promise. "If a young man has genius, yes, because he needs financial security while he is writing" he replied, "but it would be an exceedingly difficult task to pick out the people for whom grants would be justified. You see, there are thousands of people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who show promise: they can compose tolerably well and show originality, but time alone tells whether they have real genius or not; and it is no easy matter to decide which are going to develop and which are not. Of course, when a young composer can show really outstanding ability, it would be a splendid thing if some sort of financial assistance could be given to him, otherwise (unless he had private means) the best part of his time would probably be spent in playing the piano or fiddle in a second-rate band to earn enough money to live on."

When asked if a young composer could earn a living by writing serious music, Bliss replied, "I doubt it, unless he writes for the films."

Arthur Bliss feels it is a pity that struggling composers so rarely get a chance to learn from the performance of their own works. They ought to be able to write something in the morning and then hear it played the same afternoon—students' orchestras could do much more to help them in this direction. He also feels that it is wrong to train composition students on the works of the

older composers—Brahms, for instance. They should be taught from the latest works of the leading contemporaries. It must be remembered, too, that only the “mathematics” of composition can be *taught*: the true creative genius cannot be produced by academic instruction.

When questioned about the trend of modern music, Bliss said that there was every indication that the restlessness we have known during the past twenty years was now giving way to a new serenity: agitated and jerky rhythm was being replaced by a more graceful and beautiful style. He believes that as strife and turmoil on the earth subsides, music will doubtless reflect a new peace . . . “but it will not be a peace of summer or autumn . . . the new beauty in music will not be the beauty of decay; it will portray the joy and calm of early morning.”

Bliss thinks that, in Central Europe especially, the music of tomorrow will probably pass through a phase of nationalism, because the intense patriotism which is once again flowering in many of the European countries is bound to find expression in their music.

When we discussed the attitude of the general public towards modern music, he said that contemporary music was always bound to be slightly in advance of the taste of the public, and therefore it would always be somewhat beyond the understanding of the majority. He also thought that quarter-tones were unlikely to progress beyond the blackboard stage, so they need not worry the ordinary listener.

Bliss can see no reason why we should not have State subsidies for music administered through a Ministry of Fine Art. Such an organisation could do great work in the promotion of our national culture, but it would be unthinkable to allow it to *control* the arts—and music the least of all. It would, for instance, be of great value in the maintenance of the State Opera which we most certainly need at the present time. If we could establish a national opera in this country we should in time take a leading place in the world of culture; we need at least six opera companies, and their work should be zoned so that even the smaller provincial towns would have an opportunity of hearing the best.

Arthur Bliss inclines to the opinion that artists—particularly conductors and soloists—tend to give far too much consideration to their audience and not enough to the composer whose works they play. A true artist, he declares, should have almost a contempt for the audience, and reverence for the music; not *vice versa*.



He has many happy memories of the years he has spent in America. "In music as in many other things, the Americans are a nation of perfectionists" he told me. He thinks that they are rather ahead of us as far as musical culture is concerned, chiefly because they introduced music as a general subject into the curricula of their secondary schools long before we thought of doing so in this country. The excellence of their orchestras can be attributed, he thinks, to the heterogeneous mixture of nationalities represented by their personnel. They seem to get the best musicians from all the orchestras of the world.

# Rutland Boughton



THE story of Rutland Boughton is unique in the history of English music. As a young man he embarked upon a musical mission fraught with colossal difficulties, but despite bitter disappointments, he has persevered for over thirty years to reach his objective. He has known success on many occasions, but his purpose as a whole has yet to be fulfilled.

He was born at Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, in 1878, educated locally, and sent by Lady Battersea to the Royal College of Music in the year 1900 to study composition under C. V. Stanford and counterpoint under Sir Walford Davies. After a year he rebelled against academic restraint because he had already developed as a composer, but he was in no way ungrateful to his two professors, for in later years he readily acknowledged the benefit he had derived from his short period of study with them.

Several of his earliest works, though successful in their day, have now been withdrawn by him and destroyed because of their immaturity. Perhaps the most satisfactory of the others are his symphonic poem *A Summer Night*, first performed by the Halford Concerts Society in Birmingham in 1902, and his *Imperial Elegy*, written on the death of Queen Victoria and first performed under Sir Henry Wood at the Queen's Hall. Of the latter, Boughton tells me "With two other college students I was waiting in the queue for admission to the gallery of Her Majesty's Theatre, when notice was given that there would be no performance that night as the Queen was dead, so we tramped back in the night gloom along by Hyde Park to South Kensington without a word, and the tramp of our feet grew into the rhythm of this work. A week or two later it was 'tried over' on the College orchestra. Dr. Stanford told me it was the ugliest thing he had heard apart from the music of Richard Strauss. I tried to look unconcerned, but felt sick, for something more than my heart was in the work . . ."

For several years after his departure from the College, Boughton was obliged to support himself by playing in the orchestra at the Haymarket Theatre, but to a composer of his

temperament it was a distressing experience. Then in 1904 Granville Bantock gave him an appointment on the teaching staff of the Midland Institute School of Music at Birmingham which he held until 1911. During this period his symphonic poem *Midnight* was performed at one of the Birmingham Triennial Festivals. The words were taken from Edward Carpenter's *Towards Democracy*, but there was one flaw, best described in Boughton's own words: "The poet's series of pictures of various people sleeping in their beds includes a lovely and reverent allusion to the young man as he lies beside his new-made bride, worshipping sleepless on her bosom. This passage much disturbed my good publishers, who feared it would spoil any chance of success the work might have; so after a good deal of bother I consented, with Edward Carpenter's permission, to drop out the last five words. Nevertheless, I shall be most happy to hear of any choral society willing to sing them. The music stands waiting for them."

It was at about this time that *The Times* suggested that Rutland Boughton should write a comic opera, so he wrote to Bernard Shaw asking if he would write a libretto. The world's greatest modern dramatist was very coy about it, said he could write music as good as Boughton's himself, and hinted darkly that such a collaboration might result in his re-writing the composer's music. Boughton thereupon offered to re-write any libretto submitted by the dramatist, and to allow Shaw to do what he liked with the music, because that would be "true collaboration" and would knock out the specialization "that makes modern art so absurd." The lion enjoyed the twist of his tail but refused to perform.

The next and most important stage in Boughton's career was when inspired by the Wagnerian theory of music-drama he collaborated with Reginald Buckley, the poet, in an effort to establish an "English Bayreuth" at Glastonbury, where it was hoped to perform the cycle of music-dramas (based on the Arthurian legends) then taking shape in the composer's mind.

Boughton's original idea was to found a colony of artists who preferred a country life and shared his view that they should maintain themselves by other means than those of art—preferably farming, but this failed to find adequate support. However, he established himself at Glastonbury, and supported by a number of distinguished people in art and letters, including Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Granville Bantock, issued a public appeal for funds to inaugurate a festival theatre. The result was disappointing,

but he was able to take a small hall, and to stage the first performance of his famous opera *The Immortal Hour* in 1914 with a company he had formed and called The Glastonbury Festival Players. The libretto of this excellent work is by Fiona Macleod. At first, no orchestra was available: all the accompaniment had to be played upon a piano, but it convinced him that it would be a success in the "commercial" theatre. The stage decorations and dresses were by Christina Walshe, whom he afterwards married.

*The Immortal Hour* was then successfully produced at the Winter Gardens, Bournemouth, early in 1915, with a full orchestra, and later at London, Bristol, Bath, and Birmingham. It also received the first Carnegie Trust Award. Meanwhile, the work at Glastonbury was making as much progress as one could expect in wartime, and Boughton must be given the credit not only for having produced such works as Edgar Bainton's Celtic opera *Oithona*, which had never been performed until Glastonbury showed the way in which a young composer could test the technique of the stage without a staggering financial outlay; but also for helping dozens of young artists to gain a footing in the world of opera. Several of his young players found positions in the Beecham and National opera companies, and in the repertory companies.

In the autumn of 1915 Boughton set to music the old Coventry Nativity Play with the intention of making a folk-opera that could be performed entirely by the local players. *Bethlehem*, as it was called, has now become one of his most popular works.

Bernard Shaw was present at the Easter performances in 1916, and was sufficiently impressed to write in *The Nation* a week later:

"There was far less to suffer, and far less to excuse and allow for at Glastonbury than at the usual professional performances, . . . in some respects it was a better performance than Sir Thomas Beecham could have afforded in London."

In August of that year Rutland Boughton produced two new British operas for the first time on any stage: *The Sumida River* by Clarence Raybould (now Chief Assistant Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, but then almost unknown), and *The Round Table*, the second of Boughton's cycle of Arthurian music-dramas. Soon afterwards, he was called up for military service, and the work had to be suspended.

The death of Reginald Buckley in the first year of peace robbed

the Festival Movement of one of its strongest advocates, but nevertheless, the work was resumed, and in 1920 a great effort was made to establish a permanent theatre. A nation-wide appeal signed by literary and musical celebrities and several sympathetic politicians should have produced sufficient funds to commence the erection of a modest structure, but the net results were disappointing, although *The Birth of Arthur* and *The Round Table* were both produced successfully that year and afterwards taken to the Old Vic.

Boughton's *Alkestis* (Gilbert Murray's translation from Euripides) was produced in 1922 and made such a favourable impression upon the artistic directors of the British National Opera Company that they took it to Covent Garden and gave frequent performances of it during the year 1924. In that year Boughton's *Queen of Cornwall* (libretto by Thomas Hardy) was first mounted, and another effort was made to provide the Movement with a proper theatre of its own. The formation of a limited company was proposed, but once again the project failed, due partly, Boughton admits, to his incapacity as a business man. "We could not afford to pay a business manager who, once appointed, would have been able to utilize the many possibilities of the scheme."

The Glastonbury players finally disbanded in 1927, when Rutland Boughton moved to his present farm near Newent in Gloucestershire. He tells me that the Movement's failure was due to three causes: finance, politics and sex. The first needs no explanation because there was merely a continual lack of it; the second became operative when Boughton embraced Communism—one of his chief backers said bluntly "We are not going to have any Communists here": and the third can be understood by those who appreciate how art can be blighted by bigoted narrow-mindedness.

At about this time he wrote *The Lily Maid*, described by Alan Bush as "one of the most beautiful and one of the most truly original operas of recent times." It was first given at Stroud (Gloucestershire), but in 1937 it was brought to London and put on at the Winter Garden Theatre under the direction of Steuart Wilson.

*The Ever Young*, composed during 1928-9, is a development of an Irish legend on much the same lines as *The Immortal Hour*. It was given an excellent performance at Bath in 1935 when Astra Desmond appeared as Caeria. Other notable works from

Boughton's pen are *The Moon Maiden*, and two further music-dramas in the Arthurian cycle : *Galahad* and *Avalon*.

If not his masterpiece, *The Immortal Hour* remains the most popular of all his works. Its wealth of lovely melody no doubt accounted for the successful run it enjoyed at the Regent Theatre, London, in the nineteen-twenties ; yet when it was performed in America in 1927 it was given only a luke-warm reception.

Rutland Boughton has always based his technique upon that of Wagner, and remains unmoved by modern developments in his art. His only criticism of Wagner is that he was too emotional, and expressed his feelings too easily. As far as musicianship is concerned, he believes that the works of Bach are peerless, but that Beethoven preserved the finest balance between expression and form.

During a discussion upon modern trends in music, Rutland Boughton pointed out that in all civilisations the arts have developed in the same order : architecture first, then painting, literature, and finally music. Music is always in existence at the beginning, but it remains comparatively primitive or immature until all the other arts have developed, yet music is the only art that can adequately express the mystery that lies behind all life.

" *We have now come to the end of Christian civilisation ; it is all falling to pieces* " Boughton declared, " but we are witnessing the birth of a new civilisation. This is more evident at Moscow than anywhere else ; everything there is *constructive*, but wherever else we look we find destructive influences at work." For all that, he loves England and its countryside, and has no desire to live elsewhere. Moreover, he makes no attempt to belittle all the good that may be found in our traditions : he simply believes that the hope of the future—for the whole world—lies in the willing acceptance of the principles of Communism. He believes that it is impossible to exclude politics from art. " You can't keep politics out of anything : it is the conflict of judgment on the methods employed to promote the well-being of mankind." His views on the subject of religion's effect upon music are summed up in his statement " Music is the only true religion ; the rest of what is known as religion is a matter for either the scientist or the law-maker."

Contrary to those who believe that rhythm will be less marked in the music of the future, Boughton maintains that the vitality of rhythm is indispensable : " Rhythm is the physical experience in music ; melody is the spiritual." A remark about the tendency

of some modern composers to revolt against bar-lines provoked the observation "We might as well revolt against our legs."

Boughton holds himself aloof from the society of his fellow musicians, preferring a simple rustic life to a place in the fashionable circles of London's music. His personality remains somewhat enigmatical, which perhaps accounts for a certain element of romance that surrounds him and his works. He is a man of many idiosyncrasies—all quite inoffensive, as far as I am aware—and he guards the secrets of his private life from all who might attempt to disturb the dream that has absorbed—almost enveloped—him for the last thirty years. He believes utterly and completely in the ultimate success of his music-dramas, particularly of the cycle of Arthurian works, and although he realizes that proper recognition may not come in his own lifetime, he is making determined efforts to obtain adequate productions of his works in the years now ahead of us.

He has five daughters, Ruby, Moya, Estelle, Joy and Jennifer; and three sons, Arthur, Peter and Brian. Joy Boughton is one of the most accomplished oboists in the country, and it was for her that he wrote his recent sonata for oboe and piano. Brian is a trumpet student at the Royal College of Music.

Rutland Boughton's farm in Gloucestershire is a sanctuary for any composer who does not object to being cut off completely from all the amenities of modern times. It stands high upon a hill, and from the garden one can look across gentle wooded slopes to the dreaming hills of Malvern. There is not a neighbour's wireless set for miles.

# York Bowen



THE late Sir Henry Wood used to say that York Bowen was one of the British composers who have never taken the position they deserve. I am not going to suggest any reasons for this, because I have insufficient space here to indulge in musical controversies, and besides, the recognition of contemporary British composers is likely to remain a painful subject until as a nation we finally rid ourselves of our shopkeeping reputation. As a pianist, however, York Bowen's brilliance is generally acknowledged, and if we don't hear him often enough in the concert hall or on the radio, the explanation is that he is engrossed in his work as a professor at the Royal Academy of Music.

He was born at Crouch Hill, London, on February 22nd 1884, and gave his first public performance at the age of eight and a half when he played a Dussek piano concerto at Camden. He certainly had remarkable ability as a child, but he is profoundly thankful that his parents did not exploit him as an infant prodigy; and instead, encouraged him to make a thorough study of music before attempting any more public work. From the Blackheath Conservatoire he went to the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied for seven years, gaining two scholarships for the piano, and several prizes for performance and composition. He attributes much of his success to the superb teaching of Tobias Matthay, and he is proud that all his musical education was gained in this country.

He gave his first recital as an adult at the Wigmore Hall, and was still in his "teens" when Sir Henry Wood invited him to play his own first piano concerto at a Promenade Concert. Thus before he reached manhood he succeeded in establishing himself both as a composer and a pianist. His second piano concerto had been completed but a little while when the Royal Philharmonic Society invited him to play it at one of their concerts; then Richter became interested in his *Symphonie Fantasia* and in 1906 performed it in London and Manchester. Two years later Bowen conducted his third concerto at the Queen's Hall.

It was at about this time that he wrote his Symphony in E



minor, a work that was particularly well received when Sir Landon Ronald performed it at the Queen's Hall in 1912, but which is rarely heard to-day.

Then he married Miss Sylvia Dalton, daughter of the Rev. J. P. Dalton, Rector of Creech St. Michael, Somerset. His wife at that time was making a reputation as a singer, so they started giving recitals together and continued to do so for twenty years.

Although he has frequently directed his own works, Bowen admits that his skill as a conductor is not great. When he took the Queen's Hall Orchestra through a rehearsal for the first performance of his Violin Concerto in 1914 he discovered that he was moving his arms in yards when inches would have been far more appropriate. Sir Henry Wood, who had been listening, put him right on many points before the concert.

One of his happiest memories is of the occasion when Camille Saint-Saëns attended a performance of one of his piano concertos at the Queen's Hall and sent him a personal message expressing his appreciation of it.

During the Great War, York Bowen served in the Scots' Guards. His first thirteen weeks "on the square" brought on a serious illness of which the outcome was his transference to the regimental band to play the horn and the viola. The balance of the string ensemble was not all that one could desire: he was the only viola in it!

During the past twenty-five years he has given recitals in all parts of the country and on several occasions has played abroad. In more recent times he has been associated with Harry Isaacs in the performance of works for two pianos.

Like one or two other composers of his type, Bowen's lesser works are far more popular than his major compositions. He has, for instance, written a considerable number of pleasant little works for the piano which are original, beautiful and soundly constructed. These are all popular, but they do not form an adequate basis for an assessment of his ability as a composer.

He objects strongly to modern compositions which throw all the laws of music to the winds, and he dislikes the "extravagant nonsense" that frequently enjoys ephemeral popularity during a whim of musical fashion. "Some of the things we are expected to digest to-day are audacious insults" he says, "they may be clever, but these effusions which have no sense of key, melodic line or shape of any kind, cannot be regarded as music. I have always tried to compose modern music that is still *music*."

"Throughout my career I have endeavoured to appreciate the beauty of other people's music all the more because I am a composer myself, and I have no use for the arguments of people who try to excuse ugly music on the grounds that it expresses the ugly age in which we are living at the present time. If modern life is ugly, then there is all the more reason why music should bring beauty into it."

York Bowen believes that much of the cacophonous music we hear to-day is unworthy of serious attention, and that it does definite harm because it takes the place of more wholesome music. More often than not it is promoted by irresponsible coteries of silly people who delude themselves with the notion that they are being ultra-fashionable and progressive.

Bowen's best-known works are undoubtedly his many excellent compositions for the piano, but up to the present time he has written no less than four concertos for piano and orchestra, and one each for violin, viola and 'cello. His sonatas include four for piano, two for viola, and one each for 'cello, horn, clarinet and violin. The last-named was completed quite recently.

He has written two symphonies and several shorter orchestral works of fine craftsmanship, and among his other compositions we also find some unusual chamber music, of which his two quintets for horn and strings, and the two for bass clarinet and strings are the most notable.

Apart from being a composer and pianist, York Bowen is an accomplished horn player, and has also a "working knowledge" of the viola and organ. He has never regretted the time spent on these instruments, because he believes that it is desirable for a composer to have a fair knowledge of the instruments he intends to use in his works.

# Benjamin Britten



A FEW years ago, one of our most distinguished conductors described Benjamin Britten as "the most vital young man in creative music to-day." At that time, this brilliant young composer was less than thirty years of age, and when one considers that in the past the average English composer thought himself lucky if he got a little recognition by the time he reached his fifties, it seems all the more remarkable that success should have come to Britten so early in life. Now, at thirty-two, he commands the respect of musicians on both sides of the Atlantic, yet his genius has certainly not reached its maturity. What will the future hold for him? Will he continue to make such spectacular progress? Will he eclipse Elgar, Delius and Vaughan Williams when he reaches middle age? One cannot help speculating upon these exciting possibilities any more than one can forbear to express the hope that early success will not in any way produce the sense of self-satisfaction that can so easily vitiate the creative urge—not that this is very likely in Britten's case.

He was born at Lowestoft, Suffolk, on November 22nd 1913, and was educated first at South Lodge, a local preparatory school, and then at Gresham's School, Holt, a fairly "advanced" establishment which had also been attended by W. H. Auden, the eminent writer. Britten has very happy memories of his school-days; he was good at games and had plenty of time in which to study the piano and viola. He can scarcely remember a time when he was not trying to write music: even at his preparatory school he spent hours in sketching little piano pieces and songs. By the time he reached the age of twelve he had completed no less than ten piano sonatas, six string quartets, an oratorio and dozens of songs!

It was these youthful efforts that aroused the interest of Frank Bridge when he made the acquaintance of this talented boy in 1926. Convinced that Britten possessed real genius, he arranged to give him lessons during the school holidays, and from that time was his constant adviser and friend. "Right up to the time of his death, Frank Bridge was a tremendous help to me" Britten

told me recently. "I always had a great admiration for him, and I realize now how much I owe to him. He used to look at all my early efforts at composition so that he could give me advice and encouragement."

When he was still quite a boy, Britten won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music and took composition with John Ireland and the pianoforte with Arthur Benjamin. In many ways the College was a disappointment to him: during his time there he wrote an enormous amount of music, including many works of originality and dexterity, yet only one of his compositions was ever performed there—a work for chamber orchestra. Nevertheless, he found great pleasure in his student days, chiefly because residence in London enabled him to get about to plenty of concerts and make friends with other young musicians. Moreover, he soon reached a high standard of proficiency as a pianist, and his services were in constant demand.

When he left the College he went abroad for a while, chiefly to gain experience of music in the foreign capitals and to meet musicians of other types. He was a little perplexed to find himself passing through a period of restlessness when it seemed almost impossible to compose with any degree of continuity, although such a mood is very common to musicians, writers and artists in their youth.

Then he was given a chance to write the music for some films and he pulled himself together. The experience was of great value, and from that time he has worked diligently. In due course, this led to other assignments for the films, which provided a welcome opportunity of earning his own living at composition, and he was soon being asked to write music for broadcast plays as well. Requests for incidental music to stage plays also brought him into active association with leading personalities in the theatre world.

The first important performance of one of Britten's works was when the BBC broadcast his choral variations for mixed voices *A Boy was Born*. At that time he was little more than eighteen years of age. This was followed in 1934 by the choice of his *Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and Strings* by the International Society for Contemporary Music for their Festival at Florence: a work written when he was only nineteen.

In the same year the BBC decided to broadcast his *Sinfonietta* for Chamber Orchestra at one of their contemporary music concerts. This had been completed two years previously, and had

been first performed at the Iris Lamare Concert in London on January 31st, 1933. In case I have given the impression that Britten's rise to fame has been an easy one, let me quote from William McNaught's criticism of this work:<sup>1</sup> "This young spark is good company for as long as his persiflage remains fresh, which is not very long. To do him justice, his *Sinfonietta* closed down in good time. One hopes earnestly that he is aware of the nature of his present phase—a kind of programme-music phase, of which the programme is 'See how knowing I am, how much wiser than my years'—and that he intends sooner or later to use his exceptional talent for the working out of a different story, the gist of which is 'You will like this.'" Performances of this *Sinfonietta* were subsequently given in various American cities, at Geneva, Zurich and in South Africa.

W. H. Auden met Britten in 1935 and became very interested in his work. He invited him to write music for several of his plays, and thus began a collaboration that has continued happily ever since, although the eminent poet and playwright is now in America.

The Suite for Violin and Piano, completed in 1934, was first performed at Barcelona under the auspices of the I.S.C.M. in 1936 by Antonio Brosa with the composer at the piano.

Another prominent figure to become associated with Britten at about this time was Boyd Neel, who asked him to write something for his well known string orchestra. This request produced the *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, which was first heard at the Salzburg Festival in 1937 and within twelve months was being played all over the world. No less than fifty performances were given in foreign capitals and American cities, establishing an international reputation for the young composer.

His next important work was the Piano Concerto No. 1, written in 1938 and first performed at a Promenade Concert on August 18th of that year with the composer as soloist. Britten says that this work "was conceived with the idea of exploiting the various important characteristics of the piano, such as its enormous compass, its percussive quality, and its suitability for figuration; so that it is not by any means a symphony with piano, but rather a *bravura* concerto with orchestral accompaniment." Apparently, Benjamin Britten's own performance of it at the Queen's Hall made a less favourable impression upon McNaught than on the rest of us, for that eminent critic complained<sup>2</sup> . . . "Mr. Britten, as pianist, spent a great deal of his time in rapid splash work, largely of a harmonic order, and in-

<sup>1</sup> *Musical Times*: August, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Musical Times*: September, 1938.

definite in outline, that contributed little to the musical interest and was moreover overborne by the orchestra . . . Mr. Britten's cleverness, of which he has frequently been told, has got the better of him and led him into all sorts of errors, the worst of which are errors of taste." In America, however, it was greeted with roars of approval. Edward Barry reported that: "The audience liked the concerto's quaint out-of-focus melodies, its pungent but never extravagant harmonic touches, its odd percussive rhythms, and the free, almost improvisatory character of the whole. The audience also liked Mr. Britten's competent, off-hand manner of playing, and gave him quite an ovation at the end."

The fact that the foreign and American audiences seemed so much more appreciative of his work than our own began to depress Benjamin Britten towards the end of 1938, and early in the following year the lack of sympathy shown to him by some of our leading musicians made him decide to go to America with the intention of applying for nationality of the United States. He was also dissatisfied with his own work, and felt the need of travel to broaden his outlook, so he left this country in the early summer of 1939 for New York.

He spent the rest of that summer in the company of Aaron Copland, the brilliant young American composer, in whom he found a sympathetic friend. He decided, after all, to remain a British subject, though at that time he had no intention of returning permanently to this country.

The new environment, and commissions from Mrs. Coolidge and the Columbia Broadcasting System provided the necessary stimulus to resume his work, and he was also encouraged by the many demands for his services as a pianist when such works as his Piano Concerto were to be performed.

In 1940 he wrote one of his greatest works, the *Sinfonia da Requiem*, which was given its initial performance in the following year by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra under John Barbirolli. This exceptional work, towards which the critics seem unanimously favourable, is in three linked movements called "Lacrymosa," "Dies Irae" and "Requiem eternam," and employs all the resources of a full modern orchestra. Subsequent performances were given in dozens of American cities, and it was first heard in England at a Promenade Concert in the Albert Hall on July 22nd 1942 under the direction of Basil Cameron. Having quoted McNaught in a somewhat censorious mood, it

would only be fair to record that this critic was full of praise when he described the *Sinfonia da Requiem* in *The Listener*:<sup>1</sup>

"For some years past a number of people have been admiring his (Britten's) undergraduate cleverness while wondering when it is going to couple itself with a graduate mind and purpose. This symphony is the answer. Each of its movements is a characteristic and consistent design, and whatever flights of technique or idiom it may indulge in (and some of them are very saucy), they are relevant to the mood and plan of the movement. It looks, then, as if Britten has found himself at last. A remarkable exhibition of orchestral virtuosity, novel, drastic and successful. A remarkably impressive and individual work."

To complete the biographical side of this sketch I have to record that in the summer of 1941 Britten was yearning to return to England, so he set out for home in the following spring, little expecting that it would take six months to get back to London. Since his return he has maintained a steady output of new works, and besides conducting several of his own orchestral and choral works he has undertaken extensive tours with Clifford Curzon as partner in a two-piano team, and as accompanist with Peter Pears in a vocal repertory ranging from Dowland and Purcell to Schumann, Vaughan Williams and his own superb settings of the Michelangelo sonnets. The latter, by the way, are dedicated to Peter Pears, who in giving their first performance in September 1942 established himself as one of the best tenors we have in England, and they have been described by *The Listener* as the best set of songs that have appeared in this country for a generation.

I will now review briefly a few of Britten's latest works. The *Diversions on an Original Theme*, written in 1940 expressly for Paul Wittgenstein, the eminent one-armed Viennese pianist, were originally a Concerto for left-hand and Orchestra. But of greater importance in my mind was the excellent setting of the cycle of poems by Arthur Rimbaud, *Les Illuminations* (for soprano or tenor voice and orchestra), which was first performed by the Boyd Neel Orchestra with Sophie Wyss as soloist in January 1940. The music critic of the *New Statesman and Nation* summed up many people's feelings in the words:

"This is a truly remarkable composition and justified the expectation of great things from Britten. I know of no modern composition by a British composer that has impressed me so favourably as this. What strikes one at once is his truly

<sup>1</sup> July 30th, 1942.

musical invention and its copiousness. Each piece is a gem perfectly finished and original in character."

The Violin Concerto, composed in 1939, got a more mixed reception when it was first performed in the summer of 1941. Our shrewd friend Mr. McNaught, writing in the *Musical Times* observed :

" Benjamin Britten's new Violin Concerto was, in prospect, the most important novelty of the season. In the event it proved to be a work of critical rather than musical interest. The Concerto has all the marks of character and technique that win approval except one : it makes little direct appeal to one's sense of enjoyment. It illustrates what we mean nowadays by ' composers' music,' a term (curiously) of reproach that stands for too much pre-occupation with originalities of craftsmanship. This is a game of which Britten is one of the cleverest of players, and it is not surprising that he should play it for all it is worth, or that the community of concert-goers should wonder whether it is worth more than a glance. In two places the composer seems to tire of it, or to feel the necessity of showing that he has another side of his character, for the endings of the first and third movements are quite romantic. The pattern of events is in general successive : ' let us have a passage like this—and now one like this—and here's another good notion' and so on. Many of these musical notions spring from the necessity of providing difficult, tricky and bright things for the soloist to do'. . . The fact that Antonio Brosa has acted as consulting specialist suggests a search for the limit of the possible ; it also helps to explain how it is that all Britten's solo-writing escapades however new or far-fetched, are effective . . . It may be surmised that the audience felt as many audiences have felt in like cases : all this wizardry goes a long way, but music goes further."

The *Scottish Ballad* for two pianos and orchestra, written in 1941, was first performed in November of that year in Cincinnati with Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson as the soloists. Subsequently it was heard in London at a Promenade concert, and at Liverpool and Leicester besides being broadcast by the BBC from Bedford.

For the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Boyd Neel String Orchestra, Britten wrote a Prelude and Fugue, and it was first performed at the Wigmore Hall on June 23rd 1943. In the same hall a little later, Peter Pears and Dennis Brain (horn)



performed his *Serenade* with an orchestral ensemble at a Boosey & Hawkes concert. This is a setting of words by such English poets as Tennyson, Blake, Ben Jonson and Keats which has few rivals in colour, wit and poetic feeling. It has been described as one of the most remarkable and most successful of modern English compositions.

Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*, which was commissioned a little while ago by Serge Koussevitzky, was produced with great success at the reopening of the Sadler's Wells Theatre on June 7th 1945. The libretto for this striking work was written by Montagu Slater, who based it on a section called "The Poor" in George Crabbe's poem *The Borough*. It tells of an eccentric, sadistic fisherman whose activities arouse the suspicions of the townsfolk, and from whose hostility he eventually seeks refuge in death. The setting is a small East Coast fishing town in the early nineteenth century, and scenes in the local inn provide some interludes in lighter vein. To the old-fashioned type of opera-goer who expected some sugary melodies, this work came as a shock, but none could deny the dramatic value of the intense music that the composer so skilfully wedded to the text. The vocal parts are of great interest, and the orchestra produces some very fine effects—particularly during the storm.

The last occasion on which I met Britten was on a beautiful summer's afternoon last year—1944—when we were both in Regent Street trying to decide where we could go for an undisturbed conversation and at the same time get some sort of shelter from Hitler's flying bombs, which that day seemed to be falling in the London area with a monotonous regularity that was extremely trying to the nerves. We dived into a café, found a table and sat down wearily. Just as another raucous drone sounded in the distance I realized that nothing but a vast expanse of plate glass separated us from the street.

"Are you nervous?" Britten asked casually.

"Not particularly" I replied, "but I was just thinking that if anything happened to you, I should be blamed for the death of Britain's most promising young composer. After all, you wouldn't be here if I hadn't wanted to see you."

The flying bomb came nearer and nearer.

"Don't worry" Britten laughed "I shall be all right. We'll both get under the table if anything happens."

I surveyed the table quickly. It consisted of nothing but two pieces of bent chromium-plated tubing and—plate glass!

The bomb was now uncomfortably near, and we held our breath for a moment. Then it seemed to shoot directly north over Langham Place, and we breathed again.

One so often (but quite erroneously) associates genius with some sort of eccentricity that it is not easy to connect this frank, friendly, boyish character with the profundity of *Sinfonia da Requiem*. He still looks considerably less than thirty, and but for his shy sensitiveness, might easily be mistaken for one of the more cultured types of undergraduate, though in his case a pleasant light-heartedness replaces the boisterous qualities that enable certain young men to make our older University cities untenable as places of residence for peace-loving writers. Britten's modesty is such that whenever I happen to see him in Boosey & Hawkes' showroom he is picking up the leaflets that bear his portrait and carefully turning them face-downward!

He loves London, particularly when there are congenial souls to meet for music-making, but most of his work is done in a lovely old Suffolk windmill which he has converted into a singularly charming studio that is also a convenient place of residence for this young bachelor.

The establishment of a permanent, successful and truly national opera in this country is one of his principal desires for the future of music in England. "It must be vital and contemporary, and depend less upon imported 'stars' than on a first-rate, young and fresh company." Sadler's Wells have made a good beginning, he feels, with their limited resources. The art of opera, he maintains, should be "artificial" rather than realistic, because after all, people don't normally sing their conversations in real life. The rapid development of the film industry has now made it essential that opera should return to stylisation.

Britten thinks that music will play an even greater part in the film industry of the future, but it must not be used for mere effects or the filling of gaps in the dialogue: it should be employed as an integral part of the whole—as a factor contributing to a single work of art. Moreover it must be taken seriously by the composer and the director. Good examples of film music well applied may be found in the cartoons of Walt Disney.

Benjamin Britten is particularly fond of using a string orchestra as a medium for his smaller works, and gave an explanation for his preference some time ago in Boosey & Hawkes' little magazine *Tempo*. "I am attracted by the many features of the

strings," he says. "For instance, the possibilities of elaborate *divisi*—the effect of many voices of the same kind. There is also the infinite variety of colour—the use of mutes, pizzicato, harmonics and so forth. Then again, there is the great dexterity in the technique of string players. Generally speaking, I like to think of the smaller combinations of players, and I deplore the tendency of present-day audiences to expect only the luscious *tutti* effect from an orchestra. I think this has been engendered by a 'Hollywood' method of scoring—both here and abroad—and also by the modern radio sets and electrical gramophones, which tend to cut off the upper partials and give the orchestra a constant, rounded booming and 'fat' sound. I've always inclined to the clear and clean—the 'slender' sound of, say, Mozart or Verdi or Mahler—or even Tschaikovsky, if he is played in a restrained, though vital, way. But I also write for string orchestra because I don't like writing music in a vacuum. To my mind, actual contact with performance is very important. String orchestras are more enterprising in their programmes than symphony orchestras, and I have often been asked to write for them. I feel grateful if artists take the trouble to be interested in my music and ask me to compose something. In this way, I have been glad to write for soprano and tenor voices, for the horn and oboe, and string orchestra—and even for the opera house."

Explaining his attitude towards arrangements and transcriptions of other people's music, Britten declares "I don't believe in the 'copyright' of the material of music. A work of art is more than just a tune, or a rhythm, or a sequence of harmonies. If Tin-Pan-Alley wishes to use a tune of Tschaikovsky's, it doesn't affect the original work—it just makes a new one. The trouble is that general criticism of originality in music is entirely built on melody and occasionally harmony—in spite of the well-known case of the first tune of the *Eroica*, which you will find note for note in the overture to *Bastien and Bastienne*, written by Mozart when he was twelve. Transcribing music from one medium to another is a complicated matter, because you have to try and place yourself in the position of the composer conceiving the music for a different medium. You can see how this may be done in Liszt's many piano transcriptions, especially of the Beethoven symphonies. I also support the idea of transcription against many who think it inartistic, because it can extend the possibilities of hearing the music. It is difficult to generalise, and you can only judge by the value of the transcription. But I could easily

imagine that a transcription by a master of a work by a minor contemporary could be better than the original."

Britten's remarkable ability as a pianist has enabled him to keep closely in touch with many of this country's most discriminating audiences, and he readily admits that he really enjoys meeting his fellow musicians and playing before an assembly of critical amateurs: he finds it distinctly helpful as a composer to know exactly how an audience reacts to each particular type of music. There must be very few composers in this country who understand more about the intelligent concert-goer than Benjamin Britten, and this fact no doubt accounts for some of his success with the enthusiastic younger listener.

Both as a pianist and a composer, Britten has worked extremely hard for his success. I emphasize this because the speed of his ascent to eminence has given some people the notion that he must have enjoyed the backing of highly influential and wealthy patrons. This is sheer nonsense. I have never probed into his private affairs, and therefore I cannot say to what extent he is obliged to earn his living at music, but I do know that he has always regarded himself as an ordinary working musician, keen to put every ounce of energy into his job. One has only to watch him at a rehearsal to become convinced of this.

He enjoys playing the works of the old masters all the more because he is himself a composer: there is always something to learn, even from music that is distasteful to him personally. He will play such music with as much care as if it were one of his favourite compositions, because by so doing he can analyse his reason for disliking it.

# Eric Coates



**T**URNING to lighter music for a moment, we find that Eric Coates is one of the few who can write cheerful melodies that appeal to the masses without being musically vulgar. We have the assurance of many eminent composers that this is not as easy as one would imagine.

Eric Coates, who is in no way related to Albert Coates the conductor, was born at Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, in 1886, son of a physician. He has happy memories of a carefree boyhood spent in the quiet old house in which his father practised for forty years, and he recalls that his earliest efforts at music-making started when a friend from London happened to leave a fiddle at the house after a visit to the family. Eric, aged about five or six, began to experiment with the instrument, and within a couple of weeks could play quite a number of little tunes to amuse himself.

This led ultimately to violin lessons with Georg Ellenberger of Nottingham, instruction in harmony from Dr. Ralph Horner of West Bridgford (Nottinghamshire), and, at the age of twelve, the leadership of a little string orchestra in his native village. Then his father generously paid ten shillings a season to the Nottingham Sacred Harmonic Society for the privilege of allowing his son to play in their orchestra, but by the time he was sixteen, Eric had become such a useful member of the ensemble that instead of accepting a fee, they paid him half-a-guinea a concert for his services.

Coates began to compose when he was very small, but Dr. Horner forbade him to do so and insisted that all his efforts should be put into his study of harmony. Despite this injunction and a stern warning from his father about "wasting time," he continued to write.

He was still at school when he took up the viola as well, and as he seemed to make very rapid progress he wrote to Dan Godfrey, the conductor of the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, asking if there were likely to be any vacancies for viola players. Godfrey replied saying that he wanted a viola player who could "double" on a wind instrument, so Coates prevailed once again upon the

parental generosity and obtained a fine Boehm flute. Although he soon became quite an accomplished player, he never succeeded in getting into Godfrey's orchestra.

The question of his career brought a dismal suggestion from his father's bank manager eulogizing that monotonous profession. Eric was horrified, and after several feverish entreaties, his father at last agreed to give him the chance of a year in London to study music, on the condition that if he did not succeed within twelve months, he was to return home and go into a bank.

Coates went to the Royal Academy of Music in 1906 determined to win his laurels as a professional musician. He studied the viola under Lionel Tertis, and composition with Frederick Corder. In a surprisingly short time he won a scholarship for the viola, and then resolving to become independent, set about finding part-time work so that he could pay for his own rooms as well. Again he succeeded; for a friendship with a professional viola player enabled him to secure sufficient work as a deputy in various theatre orchestras to proclaim his financial independence.

After eighteen months at the Academy he went to South Africa with the Hambourg String Quartet, and while he was there he wrote his first great success: the song *Stonecracker John*, which sold over half-a-million copies.

Returning to England, he joined the Beecham Orchestra in 1909, and in the same year his *Four Old English Songs* were sung by Princess Olga Ouroussoff at the Queen's Hall Promenade concerts. Later, these songs were made famous by Melba, who sang them all over the world.

Two years later Sir Henry Wood performed his *Miniature Suite* at the Promenade concerts, and invited Coates to become his principal viola. The invitation was accepted, and the appointment lasted until 1918, when Coates gave up the viola and never touched it again.

In 1913 he married Miss Phyllis Black, daughter of Francis Black R.B.A., the eminent artist. Their son Austin, born in 1922, is now serving as a flying-officer with the R.A.F. in India. As a child Austin loved the story of the three bears, and persuaded his father to put it to music. The result was the well-known *Phantasy*, which was first produced at the Eastbourne Festival in 1926. I might add here that Mrs. Eric Coates wrote the story of *The Enchanted Garden*, and several other successes enjoyed by her husband.

Coates's first appearance as a composer-conductor was when he directed his *Summer Days* at the Queen's Hall in 1919. Since then he has toured extensively abroad, and has always enjoyed a great welcome in such countries as Norway, Sweden, Holland and Denmark.

It is now many years since he wrote his world-famous *London Suite*. The BBC was partly responsible for its phenomenal success, because the *Knightsbridge March* was chosen for that remarkably popular feature *In Town Tonight*. Within a fortnight of its *début*, the BBC was swamped with over twenty thousand letters from listeners eager to know the name of the jolly tune. When the *London Suite* was performed in Copenhagen the audience went almost mad with excitement, and the members of the orchestra joined in by applauding on their instruments, creating the most cacophonous *furor* ever known in the capital.

There is of course the old story of the provincial gentleman who told the ticket-clerk of a London tube station that he had forgotten his destination but knew that a song had been written about it. The clerk immediately burst into an ear-splitting whistle and issued a single to Knightsbridge!

Eric Coates's *Sleepy Lagoon* was a success as soon as it came from the publishers' hands, but when someone in America added words to it, the sales went up to something like half-a-million within a few weeks. Coates knew nothing about it until he received a cable from the States congratulating him on having written "No. 1 song hit in America."

His latest works include his *Eighth Army March* and *Salute the Soldier March*. It can be said with little fear of contradiction that Coates is responsible for the great "march vogue" we are experiencing at the present time.

Although he specializes in light music, he is absolutely sincere about it, and takes the greatest care with his work. "Sincerity is the keynote of existence" he says, and he abominates people who write with their tongues in their cheeks. He listens critically to all new music, and although he enjoys the work of such people as Vaughan Williams, William Walton, Arthur Bliss and Arnold Bax, he feels very doubtful about much of the modern music we are expected to accept to-day. He finds difficulty in appreciating the modern trend one finds in the work of many of the American and Russian composers and feels that they concentrate too much upon effects because they are afraid of being thought conventional.

There is now such a craze for originality that in trying to be "different" people will write almost anything.

Coates is acknowledged by millions of musicians as the link between classical and "light" music, and he can best be described as one who produces light music from a classical background, for he was brought up on Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. He cannot tolerate banality in music. One critic declares him to be the "first English composer to treat modern syncopation seriously" and another has said that he is "the only modern composer who can write a simple, popular melody without being common."

He is very fond of dancing, and frequently complains about the sentimental drivel sung by the crooners, for he demands a sparkling vitality in dance music. At one time, Ambrose would always put on his liveliest tunes when he saw Eric Coates and his partner taking the floor.

Eric Coates confesses that he is an incorrigible lover of speed. In peacetime he could never find a car that would go fast enough for him, and he delighted in air travel. He also enjoys photography, and is always looking for a better camera than the one he already possesses.

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# Harold Darke



**A**PART from his activities as an organist and conductor, Dr. Harold Darke enjoys a reputation as a composer of some extremely effective little songs and choral works. He was born at Highbury, London, in 1888, and was educated at Owen's School, Islington. Perhaps the most vivid memory of his childhood is of the occasion when at the age of eight he was taken to the great Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace. Accustomed to only the most modest, homely attempts at music-making, the little boy gasped in wonder when the great choir, orchestra and organ filled the huge building with the majestic strains of the Handelian choruses. It was a thrilling experience for one so young. Dr. Darke can still remember the wonderful singing of Sir (then Mr.) Charles Santley, the greatest British baritone of the day, and the feeling of awe he experienced when he heard the masterly playing of Sir Walter Parratt at the organ.

It was soon after this festival, when he was only nine years old, that Darke gave his first organ recital. This took place at Highbury Hill Baptist Church, and the programme included such typical favourites of a boyish enthusiast as Mendelssohn's *Wedding March* and the march from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*.

Darke's first organ lessons were received on a fine "Father Willis" instrument, and he won an organ scholarship at the Royal College of Music when he was only fourteen years of age. To his great delight he found that he would be studying under Sir Walter Parratt, to whom, he says, he owes everything. He also had the good fortune to study composition with Dr. C. V. Stanford, and to come under the influence of Dr. Charles Wood.

In his opinion, those were the greatest days of the Royal College of Music, for it was then thriving under the inspiring direction of Sir Hubert Parry, who did so much to make the institution famous. Harold Samuel, the brilliant pianist, George Dyson, Frank Bridge and H. G. Ley were there in those days.

Darke says that his first year at the College was a bad one, for he had acquired "a dangerous facility" early in life, and consequently, did not adapt himself readily to the more strict and

scholarly standards of the College. He had become accustomed to the recitalist's privilege of putting his own interpretation upon the works of the older masters, of "filling in" chords, and of adding minor embellishments here and there to please himself. Fortunately he did not take long to see his mistake, and his winning of the Tagore Gold Medal speaks for itself.

For several years he was the timpanist in the College orchestra, and was only seventeen when he had an opportunity of deputizing at a rehearsal for the Leeds Festival with Sir Edward Elgar conducting. Darke recalls with great pride and satisfaction that at the conclusion Elgar left a note for Dr. C. V. Stanford saying "*Please thank the drummer.*"

Several of Harold Darke's early compositions were performed while he was still at College, notably his *Phantasie for Piano and Orchestra* and *Three Studies for Pianoforte*.

After some years as organist of Emmanuel Church, West Hampstead, Dr. Darke was appointed to St. Michael's, Cornhill in 1916 where he has established the Monday organ recitals as a regular institution in London's musical life. The Thousandth Recital was given a few years ago before a tremendous audience which included the late Sir Henry J. Wood who had come from a sick bed to add his tribute.

During the Great War, Dr. Darke was commissioned to serve under Sir Walford Davies in the R.F.C. School for Bandmasters. In 1918 he married Miss Dora Garland, an accomplished violinist and one of the finest Bach players of her day. She was the first woman to lead the Queen's Hall Orchestra, and played at a great number of important symphony concerts in London.

He founded the St. Michael's Singers, a picked body of eighty voices, in 1920, and developed the choir so that their Annual Four-Day Festival became a musical event of outstanding interest. Another of his organizations was the City of London Choral Union, which consisted of some two hundred and fifty city workers.

Harold Darke took his doctorate at Oxford in 1919 soon after his appointment to a professorship at the Royal College of Music. He is also a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, and one of its board of examiners.

He is well known in many parts of the country as an adjudicator at musical festivals. He believes that the new enthusiasm for music-making in this country is to a great extent due to these competitive festivals, which have certainly helped to educate the public, but he feels that they have now fulfilled their purpose

because the competitive element has become far too strong, and he suggests that they should be transformed into non-competitive recitals.

Dr. Darke is very concerned about the future of Church music in this country. He deplores the lowering of the musical standards in some of our Cathedrals; he disapproves of pandering to what is foolishly supposed to be the popular taste by the use of trivial and vulgar music; and he feels indignant at the miserable salaries offered to the organists of parish churches. Although he admires the wonderful efforts that women made to replace the boys' choirs in towns that were affected by evacuation, he hopes that they will not continue to occupy the stalls, because he believes that the special type of music associated with the English Church demands the impersonal purity of boys' voices, which are not characterized by tremolo.

He urges all young organists and other church musicians to strive to live up to the great traditions behind them, believing that the church music of such composers as Fayrfax, Tallis, Merbecke, Byrd, Morley, Gibbons, Purcell, Boyce, the Wesleys, Stanford, Charles Wood, etc., have been the foundation of all that can be called distinctively English music. What is more, he emphasizes the fact that such men as Sir Hugh Allen, Sir Henry Wood, Sir Hamilton Harty, Malcolm Sargent, William Walton and Herbert Howells all received their early training as church musicians.

He declares that the musical snobs who belittle the organist's skill know nothing of the thorough and rigorous training that all the best organists undergo in the course of their apprenticeship. The old Cathedral organists (and some of the modern ones, too!) taught their pupils to read a full score *properly*, to transpose *at sight*, and among other things, to accompany from figured bass. That is why so many of our greatest conductors graduated in the cathedral organ loft.

"There is no short cut to success in music," Dr. Darke asserts. "We find budding musicians who are graceful stick-waggers, but unless they possess the ability to hear an inner part, unless they can read a score, unless they can visualize sounds, and unless, above all, they have the power of holding their players and singers, of moulding them to their will, and of imparting something of themselves to them and to their hearers, then all else is of no avail."

He believes that in the post-war world music will be far more

democratic. There will be very few wealthy patrons to support our musical organizations. Concerts must be made to pay, and this can only be done if there are larger and more commodious halls. The aerial attacks upon our cities have deprived us of many of the very limited number of suitable halls we had before the war. The need is now most urgent, but when we plan to build new halls they must be conceived on modern, democratic lines with smaller rooms for chamber music, instrumental recitals, lectures and discussions, and of course with adequate accommodation for the serving of refreshments. Dr. Darke considers that in making an audience comfortable we have much to learn from the proprietors of our super cinemas.

He is convinced that the younger generation know and appreciate what is good in music, otherwise they would not flock in such great numbers to symphony concerts all over the country. They must be given the best at prices they can afford to pay.

Contrary to the opinion of several prominent musicians, Dr. Darke contends that the composer of to-day *does* get a fair chance of having his work performed ; and in any case, the contemporary composer is treated infinitely better than he was in the bad old days when no English musician was ever honoured in his own country.

During one of our discussions I asked Dr. Darke what he thought of the electronic organ. He shuddered and expressed an emphatic belief that it would never supersede the pipe organ, though he thought that a few stops working on the electronic principle might possibly be used in conjunction with the ordinary registers. His horror at some of the weird effects produced by the players of electronic instruments reminded me of the story of the nonconformist minister who delighted in posting up dramatic notices about forthcoming sermons. One day, there appeared outside his chapel a huge notice announcing :

THE REV. ——— ———

will preach here

NEXT SUNDAY

Subject :

WHAT IS HELL LIKE ?

Come and hear our new Organ.

Turning to the subject of broadcasting, Dr. Darke told me that the BBC had grossly under-estimated the public taste in music. The inane programmes that one so often found in the broadcasts

for the Forces were anything but a compliment to the splendid men who were fighting for us. There is a proper place for good variety shows and for the more intelligent types of dance music, but there can be no justification for allowing men to shout at the tops of their voices vulgar jokes that are too stupid to be funny, for permitting women to scream or moan sickly nonsense, or for condoning the hideous noises made by some of the jazz bands.

On the other hand, the BBC have done a great service to art in bringing music to the homes of the people. To-day, the ordinary man has a far wider knowledge of great musical works and a far more discriminating taste than ever before in the history of music.

Dr. Darke's compositions reflect the meditations of a serious and thoughtful mind. His work is sensitive and colourful, and generally reveals considerable emotion.

He has written a symphony for full orchestra (*The Switzerland Symphony*), a Suite in G, two Fantasies for Strings, and a large number of choral works including *An Hymn of Heavenly Beauty* and *The Sower*. Among his many part-songs we find such favourites as *To Daffodils*, *My eyes for beauty pine*, and *To Blossoms*.

# Thomas Dunhill



ANOTHER Londoner is Thomas F. Dunhill, who was born in 1877. He is a versatile composer who has written excellent chamber music, works for orchestra, piano, solo instruments, solo voices and chorus.

His earliest musical recollections are connected with the visits of a piano tuner who always completed his task by playing the march from Handel's *Scipio* with a grand air of accomplishment. As a child of three or four, Dunhill thought this was the most wonderful piece of music in the world, and could not have been more than five when he secured an easy arrangement of it and triumphantly played it to his parents. This march still thrills him: he believes that the opening progression of three chords is one of the grandest, purest and most dignified musical progressions in existence.

It was at about this time that he was taken for a holiday to Llandudno, and heard in the Pier Pavilion an orchestra for the first time. It was conducted by the musically-notorious old Jules Rivière, who would sit at a heavily-gilded desk *facing* the audience nonchalantly waving an elaborate, tasselled baton of which his players took not the slightest notice.

Dunhill's life-long interest in the theatre began when he was quite a boy: he had a toy theatre of his own and would spend hours composing music for it. During his school days at Hampstead most of his leisure was spent in writing short operas—he was stimulated by the productions of Gilbert and Sullivan—and his friends were continually being called in to take part in these amateur efforts. Consequently, by the time he reached the age of sixteen, he had written about a dozen little operettas. His theatrical interests in those days were exclusively in comic opera. Most of his pocket money went in visits to the Saturday "Pops" at the St. James's Hall, or to performances of Gilbert and Sullivan.

He entered the Royal College of Music in 1893 and studied there for seven years, first as a student and then as the holder of an open scholarship. Under Sir Charles Stanford for composition, and Franklin Taylor for the pianoforte, Dunhill speedily came to

the front and took a leading part in the various musical activities of the College.

At the beginning of the present century he secured an appointment as assistant music master at Eton College, and five years later returned to the Royal College of Music as a professor. In 1907 he founded the "Dunhill Chamber Concerts" with the object of producing new works by British composers and giving second performances of meritorious compositions already heard elsewhere but neglected—as so many were and still are—after one performance. Despite financial difficulties, the concerts ran for several years and were a great artistic success.

In those days Dunhill was frequently abroad as an examiner for the Associated Board. He went round the world for them in 1906 and again in 1908, which meant resigning his post at Eton, and in 1912 he toured Canada. In 1914 he married Miss Mary Arnold, a great-granddaughter of the eminent Dr. Arnold of Rugby, and grand-niece of Matthew Arnold, the poet.

When the Great War was declared, Dunhill joined the army, and eventually found his way into the Irish Guards. He had the good fortune to be kept in England throughout the war, and to secure an early release after the armistice.

During the past twenty years Dunhill has produced a truly remarkable range of compositions, although chamber music and various important works for orchestra have claimed most of his attention. Noteworthy are his *Elegiac Variations on an Original Theme*, written in memory of Sir Hubert Parry, for whom he had so deep an affection, and first performed at the Gloucester Festival in 1922; and his Symphony in A minor, which was first performed in the Opera House at Belgrade on December 28th 1922. Dunhill was visiting the city in the course of a continental tour, and he will never forget the thrill of conducting the orchestra of the Royal Guard before such an appreciative audience. It was afterwards performed twice at Bournemouth, and once at Guildford, but up to the time of writing, only one movement of it has been played in London. His one-act opera *The Enchanted Garden* made a very favourable impression upon the Carnegie Trustees, and as a result it was published by the Trust in 1925.

Dunhill's songs are perfect specimens of fine craftsmanship. One of the loveliest he has ever written is called *Beauty and Beauty*, which, the composer tells me ". . . was written for John Coates, and sung by him at one of his Chelsea recitals; but beyond this I do not know of its being sung by anyone else anywhere, and yet

I feel it is one of my best songs." There must be few pianists who have not at least one or two of Dunhill's compositions for their instrument. Of these mention might be made of his *Concert Study* and *Lunar Rainbow*.

It would be impossible in the short space I have available to do justice to his chamber music. This includes two quintets, two quartets, two trios, and two sonatas for violin and piano, the second of which is one of the finest compositions that have ever come from his pen. His *Phantasy Trio* for violin, viola and pianoforte is in one movement; a most satisfying little work that should be heard more often than it is to-day. Equally fine is his *Second Sonata*, with its grand slow movement which we occasionally hear played separately.

Dunhill was over fifty when his interest in the theatre suddenly induced him to collaborate with A. P. Herbert in the writing of that very amusing comic opera *Tantivy Towers*. That he should undertake the task of writing the music for such a production caused the arching of hundreds of musical eyebrows in London alone: was Dunhill going to achieve the resounding success that Humperdinck had enjoyed with *Hänsel and Gretel*? *Tantivy Towers* was first produced at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, and was such a tremendous success that it was transferred to the West End. It ran for six months, and then went on a most successful tour of the provinces, enabling Trefor Jones to make a name for himself. It has since been staged in America and Australia.

Another light opera by Dunhill, *Happy Families*, was performed with considerable success in Guildford in 1933 and again in 1934. Then he wrote two ballets, *Dick Whittington* and *Gallimaufry*. The latter, adapted from a story by Hans Anderson was given a really lovely performance in Hamburg in 1937, but strange to relate, it has never been performed in Britain! *Gallimaufry*, by the way, is an old English word meaning "medley."

One of Dunhill's latest works is the light opera *Something in the City*, which was to have been produced in the autumn of 1939, but had to be postponed on account of the war.

The present shortage of teaching staff has induced him to return to his first musical appointment at Eton, but his work is now shared by his second wife, Isabella (Belle) Featonby, whom he married in 1942.

Some mention should be made here of Dunhill's literary work. His *Chamber Music* (1913) is still one of the most authoritative



text-books on the musician's bookshelf, and *Sir Edward Elgar* (1938) is an excellent biographical study.

Dunhill believes that as far as music is concerned, the signs of the times are very hopeful, although there is plenty of modern music which he personally dislikes. He feels that music is too much a matter of fashion these days, and thinks it is a pity when composers try to keep up-to-date when they are not really in the fashion of the hour: they would do better to concentrate upon writing just as they feel. He has always tried to be himself in music, and has never attempted to imitate anybody else, however fashionable or successful they may be.

"I believe in the *evolution* of music rather than *revolution*" he declares, "... all art should be founded upon what has gone before." There are signs that people are going back to simplicity of thought, and there might well be a reaction to the restlessness we see in music to-day. "I suppose it is right that music should depict the present-day restlessness, but surely it should also provide some sort of escape or relief from it? Personally, I have no desire to express anything in music but that which is beautiful, and which will lift people out of their troubles."

He is a little sceptical of the work of the ardent people who base everything upon folksong, because of the tendency towards a sort of national introspection. "All the greatest music is international" he declares, "... music should be universal... Purcell learnt from France and Italy, Verdi from Wagner, Elgar from Strauss, and therefore we must be prepared to work upon other foundations than our own folksong."

Dunhill believes that as a nation we are not likely to achieve much in grand opera, because with a few exceptions, English grand opera has never been a success. Our national form of opera seems definitely to be comic opera, and we should do well to establish a theatre to develop this, using the works of Gilbert and Sullivan as a backbone. He is convinced that if this project were handled properly it would be possible to build up a large public for something on the lines of the Opéra Comique in Paris.

# Sir George Dyson



ALTHOUGH the greater part of his life has been spent in the teaching of his art, Sir George Dyson's compositions during the past fifteen years have established for him a reputation as a resourceful composer following chiefly the English tradition for oratorio.

He was born at Halifax, Yorkshire, in 1883, studied the organ and composition at the Royal College of Music for four years, won the Mendelssohn Scholarship, and then spent four years in travelling—chiefly in Italy and Germany. One of the best of his earliest compositions, the colourful symphonic poem for orchestra *Siena*, was written while he was in Italy.

During the next six years he held the position of music master in three public schools consecutively: Osborne 1908-1911, Marlborough 1911-1914, and Rugby, where he taught until he embarked upon a period of war service. After taking his doctorate at Oxford in 1918 his next appointment was as organist and head music master at Wellington College in 1921, and later he also began teaching at the Royal College of Music. It was during this period that he wrote his book *The New Music*.

In 1924 he moved to Winchester College, where he spent thirteen years as music master, and conducted both the local choral society and the amateur orchestra. While he held this appointment he wrote another book *The Progress of Music* (1932), and composed some of his best works, notably *In Honour of the City* for choir and orchestra (1928), *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1931), *St. Paul's Voyage to Melita* (first performed at the Hereford Festival in 1933), *The Blacksmiths* (first heard at Leeds in 1934), and *Nebuchadnezzar* (first performed at Winchester in 1935 and repeated at Hereford in 1936).

The most important of his earlier works, the set of Three Rhapsodies for String Quartet, has been published by the Carnegie Trust. *The Canterbury Pilgrims* seems to be his most popular choral work: a colourful setting of Chaucer enriched by brilliant orchestration but London

cent rendering given by the Royal Choral Society conducted by Dr. Malcolm Sargent at the Albert Hall in 1939.

Dyson's later works include the Symphony, first played under his own direction by the London Symphony Orchestra at the Queen's Hall in 1937, *Quo Vadis* for soli, chorus and orchestra, first performed at the Hereford Festival in 1939, and his recent Violin Concerto, which was introduced to the musical world by Albert Sammons at a concert held in the Cambridge Theatre in the summer of 1942.

George Dyson succeeded Sir Hugh Allen as Director of the Royal College of Music in 1938, and was knighted three years later. When the students at the College offered their congratulations upon the honour conferred upon him, he replied in the following little verse (not his own, by the way) :

"Some do the work;  
Some get recognition.  
Better join the first;  
There's less competition."

What is Sir George like? The question can be answered without difficulty: tall, a typical schoolmaster, and stubbornly reticent on some of the subjects on which I tried to "draw him out." However, he has quite strong views on a number of matters related to his profession, as many of his students are aware.

It annoys him, for instance, when people speak scornfully or in supercilious, patronizing tones, of amateurs. He believes that the world of music would be a very dull place without the amateurs: they form the cream of the audiences and do an enormous amount to keep alive an enlightened interest in music.

Similarly, he resents the popular notion that the musician who lacks the ability to earn a living as an executant can always make a career as a teacher, for this has produced an assumption that all teachers of music are mediocrities. If this were true, music would soon get in a very bad way.

Ever since the disturbances in Europe began to drive refugee musicians into this country, Sir George Dyson has worked assiduously to prevent them from competing unfairly with our own artists. He is not unsympathetic, in fact he has given much of his time in providing relief and assistance for refugees, but he fails to see why some of them should take unfair advantage of our hospitality, and exploit the silly form of snobbishness that accepts a foreign name as a hall-mark of great talent in the musician. There have been dozens of cases where highly-competent British

musicians have been passed over in favour of foreign artists, of whose ability and past experience little has been known, merely because their foreign names have had a greater publicity value among the more ignorant sections of the community.

As President of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Sir George has always been the champion of the British musician, who is as efficient as his counterpart in any other country in the world. He believes that all our musicians must forsake narrow and selfish interests to pursue a policy that will establish their profession on a sound basis in the future and conserve our great heritage of music.

He advises all musicians to cultivate a power of concentration, calm purpose and unwavering attention to work, so that they can detach themselves from the many distractions that surround them at the present time. Every man who is devoted to a high task of any kind must also be able to refresh and recreate himself by periods of repose, of contemplation, of detached and single-minded judgment of what he is trying to do, and what end he is serving. He should at times be able to get completely outside of pre-occupation of every kind.

His advice to young musicians may be summed up in a statement made to his students at the College a year or so ago : " Seize every chance that comes along, however humble and unpromising it may seem. Nobody will buy tickets to hear an unknown performer, and you can only become known by constantly giving superb performances, at first for small fees or even none at all. Young performers are like young barristers, who must take a brief for nothing rather than sit idle, otherwise no one will ever discover their talent. When a young barrister defends some penniless man skilfully, there is always a solicitor in the court who thinks ' There's a promising young man : I must remember him.' That is the way all the great advocates began."

" If you look through the list of our most successful artists you will find that their careers have almost invariably been self-made. If you don't sing well for one guinea, you will never be offered ten. If you can't prove your worth in a scratch orchestra, you will never be asked to lead a good one. In music ' the race is to the swift : the battle to the strong.' To be a successful artist, the musician must have three gifts : talent, character and good fortune."

## C. Armstrong Gibbs



**F**EW composers have lived a more English life than Armstrong Gibbs. He was born at Great Baddow, an Essex village near Chelmsford, on August 10th 1889, and in his early years acquired a strong love of the country and a corresponding dislike of town life ; a trait which is reflected in much of his music. His father was the head of the well-known old-established firm of soap makers, and his mother, who died when he was little more than a baby, came of an old Lancashire family.

Armstrong Gibbs was brought up in affluent circumstances in a large old red-brick house surrounded by a lovely garden. As a child he was quite a prodigy : he began to improvise when he was three, and had his first song written when he was five. From an incredibly early age he could crawl under the grand piano and call out the notes of any chord played—and in their right order at that ! He feels that his musical talent was inherited from his maternal grandfather, a Unitarian minister who, though untrained, wrote a number of excellent songs.

When Gibbs was a boy it was the fashion to assume that no musical education of any value could be obtained in England, and his friends in their enthusiasm begged his father to send him at once to Germany. But the soap manufacturer was a typical business man of his day : he did not despise music, but it was his great ambition that his son should follow him into the family business. It must be remembered, too, that those were the days when musicians were generally regarded as unwashed and immoral beings by respectable Victorians. The industrialist stubbornly refused to consider a musical education for his son. "The boy is to have a normal English education. It might kill his music, but if it doesn't we'll think again. At least, it will prove to be something ineradicable."

On the whole, Gibbs is grateful to his father for this decision, ". . . for at least, I don't write German music and water . . ." So in 1899 he went to a preparatory school at Brighton, where his "fatal facility at improvisation" began to interfere with serious piano practice. The same happened when he went as a classical

scholar to Winchester in 1902, and he admits that as a result he has always played as an amateur, and always will. He left Winchester in 1908 and went up to Trinity College, Cambridge as a History Exhibitioner, taking Honours in the History Tripos three years later. Then he remained at Cambridge for a further two years to take his Mus.B.

"An episode in the final examination is important as it sheds much light upon my work as a composer. Since music had up to 1911 always taken a second place, my technical equipment as a composer (from the academic point of view) was exactly like my piano-playing—amateur. True, I had forged for myself a working technique, but even after I was given the Mus.D. at Cambridge in 1931, I always (and rightly), refused to examine for musical degrees for the simple reason that I could not have passed the papers myself."

"Then how is it that you are a Cambridge Mus.D.?" I asked.

"Simply because this degree is the one purely composers' degree, and is awarded on compositions alone. In the final examination I actually failed technically in my counterpoint papers, and was pulled through only by my compositions."

As far as music is concerned, Dr. Gibbs enjoyed many great opportunities at Cambridge. He worked with two men, Charles Wood (who succeeded C. V. Stanford as professor) and Edward Dent (who succeeded Wood). Dent took him for composition for five years, ". . . and although (owing to his colossal erudition) he was for ever wandering off on to by-paths, he did possess the supreme quality of the great teacher . . . his standard was unrelenting. Never was there any hope of getting away with slipshod stuff. All my power of self-criticism I owe to him. I went up to Cambridge incredibly ignorant, and it was there that I absorbed Franck, Debussy, Ravel, and above all, Vaughan Williams. One of the high spots in my memory is when the latter came for the Five-hundredth Concert of the University Musical Club. He stayed with me, and out of his bag he produced the sketches of the first two movements of the *London Symphony*, and did his very inadequate best to beat them out on my upright piano!"

In 1913 Dr. Gibbs decided to become a preparatory school-master. Music was his first and chief love, but as he was only a fair pianist and an even more amateur organist, how could he make a living at music? He went to Copthorne School in Sussex, but in less than two years had an opportunity of returning to his

old school at Brighton. Here he remained throughout the Great War, being unfit for military service. He never taught the piano, but took in hand all the school singing, and eventually got remarkable results. The climax came at the end of his time there, for shortly before the headmaster retired in July 1919, Gibbs prepared to celebrate the event by getting Walter de la Mare to write a play to which he could add the music. This had a memorable performance in June 1919; it was a charming little fairy play called *Crossings* and it was produced by Edward Dent and de la Mare himself. The little orchestra of flute, strings and piano was conducted by a young man named Adrian Boult!

At this time Dr. Gibbs was feeling perplexed concerning his musical career. He had married Miss Honor Mary Mitchell in 1918, and had a son, and was anxious to be able to earn sufficient to be independent of his family's fortune. His experience of submitting speculative manuscripts to music publishers had been uniformly discouraging, yet he knew that unless he made a break from schoolmastering, music would never be more than a genteel hobby. Incidentally, it might be recorded here that in 1918 he submitted two of his most successful short compositions, *The Song of Shadows* and *Five Eyes* (words of both by de la Mare) to Novello's *who flatly refused them!* The affinity which Gibbs always felt towards Walter de la Mare led eventually to his being regarded as that writer's special composer, in fact whenever the BBC have required music to anything of de la Mare's they have invariably approached Armstrong Gibbs.

However, to return to the problem of a musical career, it seemed in those days that there was no alternative but to abandon the idea and to seek a partnership in the school. Then Adrian Boult happened to express an appreciation of the music to *Crossings*, and on hearing of the composer's difficulties, insisted that he should forsake teaching and go to the Royal College of Music for a year of advanced study. It was a horribly precarious course to adopt, but with his wife's concurrence, he came up to London and worked for a year under Vaughan Williams, Charles Wood and Boult himself. He won the Sullivan composition prize, and thanks to the kind offices of the Director, Sir Hugh Allen, he got some of his work published, and began what has proved to be a most successful career as a composer.

Between September 1920 and March 1921 he secured two commissions that helped enormously to establish his reputation: to write the incidental music to Maeterlinck's *Betrothal* (the sequel

to *The Blue Bird*, which ran for one hundred and twenty nights at the old Gaiety Theatre); and to write the music to *Oresteia*, the Cambridge Greek Play for 1921. In January of that year he was invited to join the staff of the Royal College of Music, where he taught theory and composition until 1939.

The next important date in his life was 1923, when he was asked to adjudicate at his first competitive musical festival. This was at Bath, and he discovered that he had a *flair* for this highly specialized work. Within a few years he had become one of the best-known judges in the country. In 1938 he was invited to succeed Harry Plunket Greene in the highest office a professional musician can attain in the British Federation of Musical Festivals: the office of Vice-chairman. He regards his work in the "festival world" as among the most important tasks he undertakes, for he declares that in so doing, one is literally teaching the highest principles of musical art to thousands of people up and down the country.

Meanwhile, Dr. Gibbs continued composing steadily. In 1934 he won the seventy-five pounds prize in the *Daily Telegraph* Chamber Music Competition which was open to all composers in the British Empire, and which drew nearly five hundred entries. In the same year he was awarded the Cobbett Gold Medal by the Musicians' Company for services to British chamber music.

Since July 1940, when the army took over his house in Essex, he has been living at Windermere, where as chairman of the County Music Committee he has been helping to keep music alive under wartime conditions. The closing of the majority of the competitive festivals has given him more time for the composition of various new orchestral and choral works, chamber music and songs.

When we discussed modern music the inevitable question of the sacrifice of emotion to technique by contemporary composers claimed our attention. "The pendulum has certainly swung from the sentimentality of the later Romanticism, and at one time I felt it was swinging too far" Dr. Gibbs admitted. "Music must feel the emotions as well as the intellect, and I have often wondered whether the appalling 'slop' of crooning etc., is not a protest against the excessive dryness of non-emotional music."

"Can technique be overdone?" I asked.

"In one sense, no, but technique is useless unless it is regarded only as a means to an end—self-expression."

"What is the trend of modern music?"



"I should say, back to sanity after a good many years of wild experimentation such as occurred at the start of the seventeenth century."

Dr. Gibbs feels that we must be wary in judging the "cacophony" we find in the works of some of the modern composers, because the discords of one generation so often become the concords of the next. Cacophony for its own sake, of course, is hopeless, and only if it shows beauty *in some new form* can it hope to endure. The quarter-tones that some people have tried to introduce just seem like ordinary notes out of tune to Armstrong Gibbs.

He hopes that, in general, rhythm will not become more complex, because if it does, it will never reach the heart of the ordinary amateur musician.

"Does the young composer of to-day get a fair hearing?" I asked.

"I can't speak for all our younger composers, but my own view is that certain favoured young men are getting a more than favourable chance. I have not the least doubt that there are others not so fortunately placed who don't."

"Is it possible to make a living by writing serious music?"

"I can only speak of the financial results of music as far as they concern myself. I know that I could never have lived on composition, and I very much doubt whether any of the serious composers have been able to do so. I know of at least one or two cases among my own contemporaries and friends in which, having no private means, they have not been able to fulfil their early promise."

Believing that Britain's musical culture is as fine as that of any other nation in the world, Dr. Armstrong Gibbs hopes that music here will regionalize and decentralize itself. "In pursuit of this end, London must stop imagining that it is the only real centre of music in Britain. The word *provincial* should be shorn of its slightly contemptuous connotation, and London should realize that it is not competent to dictate the musical needs of the rest of the country, and that it is in no way superior."

He is convinced that the musical festivals have done more than anything else to encourage amateur music-making of a reasonably high standard, and he hopes they will be resumed after the war. The teaching of "musical appreciation," unless it is done by the very few who have proved themselves to be masters of the subject, can do more harm than good.

Armstrong Gibbs' compositions include over a hundred songs,

and such works as *La Belle dame sans merci* for chorus and orchestra (1931); a Symphony in E, which has been played by the BBC and at Bournemouth; a one-act comic opera *The Blue Peter* (libretto by A. P. Herbert) published by the Carnegie Trust and also by Stainer & Bell; *The Highwayman* for chorus and orchestra; and *Deborah and Barak*, which was performed by the Huddersfield Choir in 1937. His choral symphony *Odysseus* for soprano and baritone soli, chorus and orchestra, is a large scale work which was to have been performed by the Royal Choral Society in November 1939, but unfortunately the outbreak of war temporarily put a stop to musical activity of this type in London.

# Eugene Goossens



A BRILLIANT conductor, and composer of many interesting orchestral works, Eugene Goossens is one of the English musicians who have sought wider scope for their work on the other side of the Atlantic. I do not, of course, exclude the possibility that the great revival of interest in music at home might tempt him to return to us permanently in due course, nor do I overlook the fact that the wonderful development in air transport will in time make it immaterial whether one lives in Britain, America or even the South Sea Islands. Science, it seems, will probably do more than anything else to make us realize that art is international.

Goossens was born in London on May 26th 1893 of a distinguished musical family. His father and grandfather were both eminent conductors in the realm of opera; his brother Leon is now one of the greatest oboists in the world, and two of his sisters are prominent harpists. He entered the Bruges Conservatoire when he was only ten years of age, but came to England later and attended the Liverpool College of Music until a scholarship brought him to London to study at the Royal College of Music under C. V. Stanford for composition, and Rivarde for the violin. His first composition for the orchestra, *Variations on a Chinese Theme* was given under his own direction at one of the students' concerts.

In 1911 Sir Henry Wood engaged him for the Queen's Hall Orchestra, and he played with that august body of musicians until Sir Thomas Beecham sought his services as an assistant conductor in 1915. One of his outstanding memories of the years he spent with Sir Henry Wood is of a Promenade Concert in the autumn of 1914 when his second orchestral work *Perseus* was given its *première*.

After six years with Sir Thomas Beecham, Goossens founded an orchestra of his own and gave a series of symphony concerts which not only drew considerable attention to him as a conductor, but also enabled him to present one or two of his own compositions. In the previous autumn his symphonic poem *The Eternal Rhythm* had been performed at a Promenade concert, and it was then

chosen for a second performance at the inaugural concert of the British Music Society in June 1921.

By this time, he had also made a name for himself as a player and composer in the world of chamber music: he had done excellent work as a member of the Philharmonic String Quartet, and had impressed the critics with his *Fantasy for String Quartet* (1915), his *Quartet in C* (1916), and his two sketches *By the Tarn* and *Jack O' Lantern* (1916). Of the *Fantasy*, Delius said that it was the best thing of its type he had ever seen from an English pen. The influence of Ravel seems to have played some part in the shaping of this work. The three movements of the *Quartet in C* were dedicated to his three colleagues in the Philharmonic String Quartet: Arthur Beckwith (first violin), Raymond Jeremy (viola) and Cedric Sharp ('cello). Each movement is really a subtle musical portrait, and the four notes that open the concluding movement are taken from the music-hall song *You're Here and I'm Here* which Cedric Sharpe had "on the brain" and persisted in whistling to the annoyance of his friends shortly before the *Quartet* was written.

Goossens' next task was the conducting of the Russian ballet in *The Sleeping Princess* at the Alhambra. In 1922 he wrote the overture, six *entr'actes* and the incidental music to Somerset Maugham's play *East of Suez*. All his enthusiasm for oriental effects went into this music, and it aroused so much curiosity that everybody believed a rumour that he had procured Chinese music and had forced his orchestra to use fantastic eastern instruments! Actually, the music Goossens had written contained nothing but western harmonies, and his players were using their normal instruments.

In the following year his *Sinfonietta* was first performed by the London Symphony Orchestra. This work, in three linked movements, is rather more diatonic than his earlier compositions. At about this time he was appearing frequently as a conductor at Covent Garden, and seemed to be making good progress, but in 1923 America tempted him with a much more rapid means of rising to fame, and he went to New York to become the conductor of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. In the United States he soon established a reputation as one of the world's most brilliant conductors.

In 1927 he caused quite a sensation by conducting a very revolutionary type of symphony by Charles E. Ives of New England, thereby finding favour in New York's more advanced

schools of thought in music. In the same year, at Rochester (New York), he conducted the first performance of his *Rhythmic Dance*; a scherzo in duple time. Four years later he succeeded Fritz Reiner as conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Return visits to Britain were made in 1926 when he conducted at His Majesty's Theatre for the famous Diaghilev season of Russian ballet, in June 1929 to conduct his own opera *Judith* at Covent Garden, and again in 1937 when at the same opera house he conducted during the international season held to celebrate the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. It was during this memorable season that he had the honour of directing another of his own works, the four-act opera *Don Juan*. The libretti of both of his operas, by the way, were written for him by Arnold Bennett.

Goossens' compositions are chiefly in the chromatic idiom; they are modern and experimental without being freakish, although his earlier works suggested that he might develop on rather curious lines. This has not happened, for his later compositions show some concern for the more elegant style. Of the two operas, *Judith*, the shorter, is the more satisfactory. Percy Grainger was very favourably impressed by it, and declared that "only a keen, vigorous mind could have conceived this music: in the main somewhat unbending in its extreme austerity and conciseness, though flowering forth occasionally into brief moments of luscious sensuousness."

Writing in *Music and Letters* some years ago, R. H. Hull said of Goossens' work: "Notwithstanding a prolific output we find much to show a true co-operation between mind and intellect. From the beginning, Goossens has never lacked imaginative qualities, although their strength has greatly increased with experience. Since he began to see his way clearly, his sense of beauty, which is both delicate and subtle, has also gained in depth. The principal works reconcile convincingly an elegance of style and solidity of ideas."

Goossens' most recent work of importance is his Symphony (Opus 58) which was first performed in this country on July 6th 1943 during a Promenade concert at the Albert Hall. It is an impressive work, but some of his critics were disappointed because they thought that in undertaking a work of this magnitude Goossens would have made it his masterpiece, whereas the Symphony scarcely comes up to the standard of some of his other works, and its performance in 1943 was not a great success.

To all but his more intimate associates Goossens is apt to give an impression of aloofness, though he does so quite unconsciously. He prefers to conduct other people's works to his own, but always enjoys writing music, and finds that the morning and early evening are the best times of the day for composing.

He has several other interests besides music. The sea has always fascinated him, and at one time he would spend hours on docks and harbours looking at ships and occasionally talking to their crews. This nautical interest originated in his boyhood when he was living at Liverpool, for much of his leisure time was spent on that city's docks, and it explains his passion for salt-water fishing.

Goossens still retains his boyish interest in steam engines. He was once allowed to drive a locomotive and has never forgotten the thrill of it: even today he could not resist an invitation to ride on an engine if one were sent to him. Add to this a great love of architecture and an occasional game of golf and the picture is complete.

# Victor Hely-Hutchinson



WHEN he succeeded Mr. Arthur Bliss as Director of Music at the BBC, Dr. Hely-Hutchinson assumed the rôle of Britain's chief musical administrator, thereby adding considerably to the weight of the influence which, as a composer, he is likely to exert on the development of English music.

He was born at Cape Town on December 26th 1901, the youngest son of Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, the last Governor of Cape Colony. As a child he was sent to a private school in England and proceeded in due course to Eton as a Scholar. The desire to express himself in music asserted itself at a very early age: he began composing when he was five, and within three years was writing quite tuneful little melodies. He was only eight when his parents had a collection of his little sketches for violin and piano published under the title *A Child's Thoughts*. "Happily," he says, "these are now out of print and have long been forgotten."

At school Victor Hely-Hutchinson composed prolifically, but none of these boyish efforts has survived except a few settings of poems by Walter de la Mare written just before he left Eton, and published shortly afterwards.

He went up to Oxford in 1920 as Nettlehip Scholar at Balliol College, started by studying history, but later received permission to work for Mus.Bac. After eighteen months, however, when he was twenty-one, Sir Hugh Allen was instrumental in getting him a lectureship at the South African College of Music, which two years later was incorporated into the University of Cape Town. So Mr. Hely-Hutchinson left Oxford without a degree.

His contemporaries at Oxford included A. E. Dickinson, Philip Brown and Guy Warrack, and he has very happy memories of the Oxford Music Club, the Balliol Concerts and the Bach Choir, in which he sang under Sir Hugh Allen.

He is particularly appreciative of the guidance and encouragement he received in his early days from Sir Donald Tovey, whom he will always remember for the aphorism "A work of art is that which is its own length." He became one of Tovey's pupils when he was a boy of eight and worked with him for six years, chiefly

in the school holidays. His later studies with him were more intermittent.

After about three years at Cape Town, Hely-Hutchinson returned to London to join the music staff of the BBC, and eventually went to Birmingham in 1933 as the Corporation's Midland Regional Director of Music. In the following year Sir Granville Bantock retired from the Midland Institute School of Music, relinquishing also his professorship of music at Birmingham University, and Mr. Hely-Hutchinson was appointed to succeed him. At that time the professorship was converted into a full-time appointment.

The ensuing years at Birmingham saw the ripening of his friendship with Leslie Heward, who had been an assistant music master at Eton during Hely-Hutchinson's time there, conductor of the Cape Town Orchestra when his friend was at the South African College of Music, and subsequently, conductor of the City of Birmingham Orchestra. "Heward was the finest 'natural' musician I've ever known," Dr. Hely-Hutchinson told me recently.

The University and the general musical life of the city allowed him little time for composition, but he was able to give a number of piano recitals, including a series at which he played the complete range of Beethoven's piano sonatas.

In 1940 he was given special permission to take the degree of Doctor of Music at Oxford without graduating first as a bachelor. When this was conferred upon him he went into Congregation wearing a scholar's gown and came out in the robes of a Doctor of Music: a procedure which he believes to be unprecedented in the history of the University except of course in the case of people receiving honorary degrees. An honorary M.A. had been conferred upon him some six years previously by Birmingham University, but its hood and gown could not have been worn on this occasion.

He took up his duties as Director of Music at the BBC in the early autumn of 1944, when the daily doses of flying bombs and other missiles discharged by the apostles of *Kultur* were making London anything but a musician's paradise.

Dr. Hely-Hutchinson's compositions include a number of songs, works for full orchestra and chamber ensembles, and an operetta *Hearts are Trumps*. His major works are the highly successful *Carol Symphony*, his Piano Quintet and a Sonata for Violin and Piano. His Variations, *The Young Idea*, and such songs as *Old Mother Hubbard* and his settings of Edward Lear's



*Nonsense Rhymes* have become very popular, and mention might also be made of his settings of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*.

He feels strongly that if music is to take its proper place in our national culture in the future it will need a central controlling body irrespective of the BBC. "The authority may be either unofficial and established by common consent from below, or superimposed from above, but in either case its functions should be to make known the ways in which the musical profession can and does serve the public, and to provide and ensure the conditions under which the profession can give its best service."

He would prefer an unofficial authority, but is afraid that the musical profession has grown too big and become too specialized for a reasonable number of its representatives to agree on the details of a general policy. Therefore, Dr. Hely-Hutchinson advocates the establishment of a Ministry of Fine Art in some form, of which an independent Music Section could be established. He wants State support for music; not State control, and can see no reason why this should have a restrictive effect if it is thoroughly understood that the musician's value to the community lies in his own individuality, which he must be free to develop.

To the critics of State support for music, he points out that University professors are entirely free from restrictive influence, and therefore if a University music faculty can work satisfactorily under this system there is no reason why a Ministry of Fine Art should not do likewise.

The need for co-ordination in artistic matters, he declares, is obvious when one considers that Britain is extremely short of really capable conductors. This is chiefly due to the fact that we possess so few permanent orchestras with which promising young conductors can gain the experience that is so vitally necessary for their progress. Under an appropriate Ministry, there should be many more permanent orchestras available, and all suitable young conductors could be given opportunities to improve their technique by working with a variety of them. This is but one instance of the many advantages that would be enjoyed if music were efficiently organized by a central body.

When I discussed the trend of modern music with him at the BBC recently, Dr. Hely-Hutchinson said that the technique of music—its counterpoint, harmony, etc.—must go on expanding and developing, but this did not necessarily mean that new compositions with the greatest originality were always the most successful. Only a comparatively small number of those com-

posing to-day have really something to say. The young composer should always write with sincerity, and should never try to ape other people's idioms.

Considering all the difficulties of the present time, he thinks that the contemporary composer gets quite a fair chance of being heard, but proper encouragement cannot be given until music is organized on a better basis altogether.

# John Ireland



I HAVE a feeling that the creative powers of John Ireland have always been stimulated by the deep love of poetry engendered within him during his childhood by the literary atmosphere of his home. His parents, Alexander and Dorothy Ireland were both authors, and enjoyed the friendship of many prominent writers, so their son, born at Inglewood, Bowden, Cheshire, on August 13th 1879, grew up in a cultured environment in which self-expression through any of the arts was regarded with approval. Alexander Ireland, by the way, was the editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, and the author of *The Book-lover's Enchiridion*.

John Ireland was educated at Leeds Grammar School, but was only fourteen when he came to London to study at the Royal College of Music under C. V. Stanford for composition and Frederick Cliffe for the piano. He wrote a number of pieces for solo instruments in his youth, and a fair amount of chamber music, but in later years he destroyed or withdrew from circulation almost everything he had written up to 1908, so that as far as we are concerned his career as a composer did not start until he was nearly thirty years of age.

In 1908 his Phantasy Trio in A-minor won him the second prize in the Cobbett chamber music competition, and in the following year he took the first prize in the same competition with his Sonata in D-minor for violin and pianoforte.

Five years later he aroused the attention of many of the critics with a piano solo called *Decorations* and his first orchestral work *The Forgotten Rite*, which is said to have been inspired by a holiday in Jersey. The latter won the approval of many leading conductors, and was performed on several occasions during the ensuing years.

He was still dissatisfied with much of the music he was writing, however. In 1914, for instance, he wrote a Trio in E-minor (in three movements) which he withdrew after its first performance with the intention of revising it, but never did.

His first outstanding success came in March 1917, when

Albert Sammons and William Murdoch gave the initial performance of his striking Sonata for violin and piano in A-minor. This *opus* seemed to express all the deep emotions that the people of this country were feeling during those dark days of war with more eloquence than the spoken words of many of the war poets. It won the hearts of the audience immediately; the critics were unanimous in their praise, and within a few months most of the eminent violinists in Britain were playing it to a thoroughly sympathetic public. That anything coming under the heading of "chamber music" could become so popular was little short of a sensation, and publishers who normally looked upon the issue of chamber music as a necessary but highly unprofitable speculation actually competed for the right of publishing this sonata! The first edition was sold in advance before it left the printers' hands.

Then came such works as the Piano Sonata (1920), the symphonic rhapsody *Mai-dun* (1921), the Sonata for Violoncello (1923); such songs as Ireland's setting of Masfield's *Sea Fever* and the three settings of Hardy's poems *Summer Schemes*, *Her Song* and *Weathers*; and various piano pieces, of which I might mention *Amberley Wild Brooks* (1921), *April* (1925), *Month's Mind* (1935) and *Green Ways* (1938). The title of *Month's Mind* is explained by a quotation from Brand's *Observations on Popular Antiquities*: "... days which our ancestors called their 'month's mind' ... (are) the days whereon their souls (after death) were had in special remembrance—hence the expression of 'having a month's mind' to imply a longing desire." The longing in this particular piece is suggested by restless overlapping phrases, but these tend to make it rather monotonous, in my opinion.

Another of Ireland's most popular works is the Piano Concerto which he wrote in 1930. In the final movement there is a suggestion of modern jazz; a pleasant, lively passage. This work must have been given at least twenty performances in England, and it is worth recording that it was played in Moscow in 1934 under the conductorship of Edward Clark, and shortly afterwards in Budapest under Dohnányi and in Vienna under Konradt.

Foreign countries have also shown considerable interest in his *London Overture* (1936), a work which we might profitably compare with the compositions of Elgar and Vaughan Williams also inspired by our great city. Ireland's picture is a colourful affair, but lacks the spirit and strength of character shown by Elgar, and the deep pensiveness of Vaughan Williams' wonderful *London Symphony*. However, *A London Overture* has taken its place in

British music, and will undoubtedly become even more popular now that Dr. Malcolm Sargent has made such an excellent record of it with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

In more recent years Ireland has written a *Concertino Pastorale*, which does not, however, strike me as being particularly pastoral; and among other things, a fine Elgarian choral setting of J. A. Symonds's poem *These Things shall be*, which was launched in magnificent style at a BBC Symphony Concert in December 1937. It was a musician's attempt to assist a poet's effort at stimulating the conscience of a nation lulled into a sense of false security by the most incompetent bunch of politicians ever inflicted upon a free but apathetic people.

Another quite recent work, his *Epic March* (commissioned by the BBC), suggests that Ireland wanted to snatch a little nation-wide popularity for himself, for it is a work full of appeal for the man in the street. The fact that he succeeded in this without being vulgar in the slightest degree all goes to show that he is a very able composer. The *Sunday Times* described it as "a sincere and deeply felt piece of music" of which the whole atmosphere is that of idealism "as far removed from jingoism as a Persian carpet is from a piece of cheap linoleum." It has a suggestion of Parry as well as Elgar, and the middle section is based on a really beautiful melody that sticks in the memory as persistently as anything I know.

During the early part of the Second World War, John Ireland was staying in the Channel Islands and working on an arrangement of his *Downland Suite* for Orchestra. When a section of the German army also decided to take up residence there he was obliged to leave in a hurry, and alas! the greater part of the score was left behind. His "Island Sequence" *Sarnia* was written on Guernsey by the way, and was introduced to the public by Clifford Curzon in January 1942. It is a cycle of three short tone poems; delightful impressions of "Le Catoroc," of a May morning and of spring tides.

Turning to his Fantasy-sonata for clarinet and piano, which was first performed at the Wigmore Hall by Frederick Thurston (for whom it was written) and Kendall Taylor on January 29th 1944, we find one of the best works for the clarinet since the days of Brahms. The *Sunday Times* declared "One of the most outstanding characteristics of this new fantasy-sonata is its continuous stream of melody; and another is its richness of rhythmic invention." The *Times* described its material as "concentrated

into one self-contained movement, in which the lyrical qualities of both instruments are emphasized in characteristic terms of genial, fluid harmony and iridescent figuration." A notable broadcast followed this *première*, in which the composer himself played the piano part.

A little while ago Ralph Hawkes asked Ireland (and several other composers) to write something for a wind-band in celebration of the approaching centenary of the first military band publication issued by the firm of Hawkes. The composer has now produced a bright little work called *A Maritime Overture*, dedicated to its inciter. Ireland says that while he was writing it he had in mind Hawkes's fondness for yachting, and his affection for the sea, "which I share, though I cannot yet aspire to a yacht."

John Ireland is an honorary Doctor of Music of Durham University, and is keenly interested in the work of all his contemporaries, particularly Igor Stravinsky and the late Maurice Ravel. Of the old masters his preferences are for the works of Bach and Mozart. It need scarcely be added that poetry still remains one of his greatest sources of inspiration.

# Gordon Jacob



DOCTOR Gordon Jacob is primarily a composer, for although he is a professor at the Royal College of Music, a good pianist and conductor, he finds the greatest satisfaction in expressing himself by the creation of his own music.

He was born in 1895 at Upper Norwood, a suburb of London, and was educated at Dulwich College. He started composing at the age of ten, and enjoyed the distinction of having one of his earliest works performed by the Dulwich College Orchestra when he was only fifteen.

Throughout the Great War he served in the army, and was severely wounded. He spent two years in a German prison camp and occupied himself chiefly in trying to make music to cheer his fellows. In the face of many difficulties he succeeded in forming a prisoners' orchestra and gave innumerable concerts which did much to while away the long, dreary days of internment. He arranged all the music himself, learning many of the technicalities of orchestration as he went.

Like many of the other men whom the war had caught in their "teens," he returned to this country after the Armistice with no qualifications for any particular profession, so he decided to try his luck at journalism. After writing for a year he gave it up, as success seemed far distant, and then obtained a grant from the Board of Education which enabled him to become a student at the Royal College of Music. He took composition under Sir Charles Stanford, harmony and counterpoint under Herbert Howells and conducting under Sir Adrian Boult, and in time he was able to establish himself as a teacher of music. One of his first appointments was to the staff of Morley College, but later he became an examiner to the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He is now an examiner for several universities.

As his own compositions became better known, he was frequently invited to conduct his own works at symphony concerts, and for several years prior to the present war was the regular conductor of the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society. He took his doctorate at London University in 1935.

Dr. Jacob can claim the honour of having had work commissioned by the BBC, and during the past four or five years has also been engaged in writing music for British films.

The first films with which he was associated were produced by the Crown Film Unit at the Denham Studios. As I write this, he is engaged upon a film that is being produced at the Ealing Studios with an orchestra under the conductorship of Ernest Irving. Explaining some of the intricacies of writing music for the films, Dr. Jacob told me that his material has to be fitted in to an exact number of seconds, which of course correspond with a precise number of feet of film. This sounds simple enough, but it is not at all easy from the composer's point of view.

Dr. Jacob might also be described as a specialist in orchestration: he has produced some very fine scoring of ballets—notably *Les Sylphides*—for the Vic Wells Company. He has also written two ballets of his own. His textbook on orchestration and transcription *Orchestral Technique* is regarded as one of the best available, and his transcriptions of various works of Byrd, Purcell, etc., are used extensively.

Gordon Jacob prefers to lead a quiet life that allows him to go on steadily with his composition. This is not always possible, for when he is engaged upon film music he often has to work against the clock, but despite the strain that this puts upon his creative powers, I think he enjoys it.

He lives at Ewell in Surrey, and spends most of his leisure in gardening, and reading anything from detective stories to books on travel and science. He is also very fond of motoring.

He was married in 1924 to Miss Sydney Wilmot Gray, elder daughter of the Rev. A. W. Gray of Ipswich. Mrs. Jacob is a good musician, and acts as a critic of his work. "My wife is most helpful to me," Dr. Jacob declares, "she has excellent taste; nothing unworthy gets past her."

Dr. Jacob believes that film music opens up many possibilities for the contemporary composer. It provides adequate remuneration, which the composer has rarely received in the past, and plenty of scope for initiative and imagination. The film companies are not unmindful of the great revival of interest in music, and fully appreciate now the value of using good music in their productions. At one time, the music was of such minor importance in the film industry that whenever special compositions were required they were produced in a most haphazard fashion by musical "hacks" who helped themselves liberally to the works of



the great masters, and had no scruples about "pepping them up a bit." To-day, we find our greatest composers, Bliss and Vaughan Williams, for instance, writing first-rate music expressly for the films. Dr. Jacob thinks that our famous orchestras might do a great deal more for the film industry in the future.

He is open-minded about music, if it achieves what it sets out to do, whether it is symphonic or otherwise. He believes that the future of British music looks promising, though the contemporary composer is still getting far too little encouragement from the leading symphony orchestras. The BBC is about the only body that makes any serious effort to perform a reasonable amount of new music, and therefore Dr. Jacob is afraid it will be fifty years before the younger British composer gets a fair chance. He feels that there is still far too much German influence in British music, though such composers as Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst certainly got rid of it in their work. There persists the silly notion that in music everything German is good and everything English is inferior.

Gordon Jacob is undoubtedly one of the most promising of our "younger" composers to-day, though he has yet to receive the recognition that is due to him. His compositions are models of good construction; he uses his materials sparingly and achieves a striking clarity. He has an acute sense of rhythm and a clever way of introducing clean harmony that is modern and refreshing without being offensive to those who, as a rule, dislike contemporary music. His is typically English music; in most of it we find a sparkling vitality, and occasionally, unmistakable signs of a sense of humour. Perhaps the most outstanding of his works are his Clarinet Quintet and the Sinfonietta commissioned by the BBC.

Dr. Jacob's works include :

- Ballet : *A Jew in the Bush* (1923).
- Concerto for Viola and Orchestra (1925).
- Concerto for Piano and Strings (1927).
- Overture : *Clogher Head* (1928).
- String Quartet : *Denbigh Suite for Strings* (1928).
- Symphony in C (1929).
- Variations for String Orchestra : Terzetto for Violin, Viola and 'cello (1930).
- String Quartet No. 2 (1930).
- Passacaglia for Orchestra (1931).
- Ballet : *Uncle Remus* (1932).
- The Birthday* (A Children's Cantata, 1932).
- Concerto for Oboe and Strings (1933).

*The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (orchestral piece, 1934).  
*Donald Caird* (ballad for chorus and orchestra, 1935).  
Variations on an Original Theme (for orchestra, 1936).  
Violin Concerto (1937).  
Quartet for Oboe and Strings (1938).  
Quintet for Clarinet and Strings (1940).  
*A Festive Overture* (1941).  
Symphony for Strings (1943).  
Sinfonietta (1943).

# Roger Quilter



WHEN the German airmen were doing their best to destroy London, Roger Quilter was sitting in the study of his pleasant little house in St. John's Wood calmly composing songs. He was far more disturbed when I wanted to describe him with the word "aristocratic" than when a brace of land-mines fell perilously near his doorstep.

He was born at Brighton on November 1st, 1877, a son of the late Sir Cuthbert Quilter, Baronet. Of the agreeable preparatory school kept by a Mr. Brackenbury at Farnborough he has very happy memories, and he is still appreciative of the encouragement he received when his interest in music, poetry and drama became known. Incidentally, he had an excellent singing voice as a boy, and was most useful in the choir of the school chapel.

When he passed on to Eton he missed the friendly, uncereemonial atmosphere of his preparatory school, although he met many interesting people. He found, too, that it was not so easy to find time to study music, English literature and poetry. One of his greatest joys at Eton was to walk over to St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, to listen to the fine choir accompanied by Sir Walter Parratt.

Instead of going to Oxford or Cambridge, Quilter proceeded to Frankfurt to study music at Hoch's Conservatoire under Iwan Knorr (the eminent Russian professor of composition) and met Cyril Scott, Percy Grainger, Norman O'Neill, and Balfour Gardiner there.

He still remembers the extraordinary ease with which Cyril Scott used to extemporize at the piano: he was one of the most promising of the younger students of composition, for he seemed to possess such outstanding ability in music that nothing was too difficult for him. Although very young, Grainger also was very gifted, particularly at composition. His electrifying personality and enthusiasm considerably influenced Quilter, who later became one of his most ardent admirers, and a life-long friend.

Cyril Scott in *My Years of Indiscretion* says that while they were at Frankfurt, Quilter was sharply rebuked by their landlady

for putting crumbs outside his window for the birds in wintertime. She informed him indignantly that it was "unrefined," and poor Quilter—in those days even more sensitive than he is now—felt very hurt until Scott pointed out that the good lady meant the adjective to apply not to Quilter but to a certain habit of the birds!

After four and a half years as a student, Quilter returned to London and started working on his own. His great love of poetry made him concentrate upon the writing of songs, and his earliest works were *Three Songs of the Sea*: (*The Sea-bird*, *Moonlight*, and *By the Sea*), and *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*, which impressed Gervase Elwes so much that he asked Boosey's to publish it. Curiously enough, Quilter thought it was no good at all at the time, but now it has become one of his most popular works. For many years he knew a lady who admired it so much that every time she met him she would say "Oh, Mr. Quilter, I do like that song of yours . . . the one about the beetle."

His *Three Shakespeare Songs* (*Come away Death*, *O Mistress Mine* and *Blow, Blow, thou Winter Wind*) waited two years before they were published; the reason given being that Shakespeare, in those days, was not considered "popular" enough as a lyric writer!

Quilter considers that it was chiefly through Elwes' exquisite artistry and enthusiasm that his songs first became well known. Madame Ada Crossley, the prominent Australian contralto, might also be mentioned as one of the first great singers to take up his songs.

Some of the singers in those days were unusually accomplished musicians: Plunket Greene and John Coates in particular. Quilter remembers how he called upon Coates one day at the latter's request with a number of songs that he had just written, and was amazed when after looking through the words, this distinguished singer sang them all through perfectly at sight in exactly the *tempo* and with precisely the expression intended by the composer.

Quilter's first orchestral compositions were *Serenade for Orchestra* and *Three English Dances*, all of which were performed by Sir Henry Wood at Promenade concerts. Then he wrote the music to *Where the Rainbow Ends*, the delightful Christmas production that has been staged by Miss Italia Conti with great success in London every year since Reginald Owen (now a film star in America) first played in it at the Savoy Theatre in 1911. Quilter tells me that he wrote all this light music in about two months, and did not think for one moment that it would retain

its popularity for so many years. It is interesting to note that Noel Coward played a juvenile part in its first production. Quilter remembers him as a delightfully cheeky little lad always up to mischief, but beloved by all the cast; and recalls how he came up to him with an expression of profound musical understanding on his youthful face and exclaimed "I like your music, Mr. Quilter."

It was to this play that Roger Quilter wrote his famous *Children's Overture*, but for some reason he decided not to use it, and it was left in manuscript until he revised it for publication in 1920 or thereabouts. This enchanting little work has enjoyed great popularity for nearly a quarter of a century, and it is likely to remain a favourite wherever light-hearted children's music is required. Quilter is very modest about it himself: he refuses to take any credit for it and protests that its beauty is derived entirely from the lovely melodies of the nursery rhymes he used. It is hardly necessary to add that innumerable gramophone records have been made of it.

One little anecdote he loves to tell is about a fashionable social gathering he attended in London after he had become quite well known as a composer. A young lady was heard to ask the hostess:

"Who is the tall young man over there?"

"Roger Quilter" the lady replied.

"Oh yes, . . . but . . . who is Roger Quilter?"

"My dear! Don't you know? . . . his brother married one of Lord ——'s daughters!"

His settings of Shakespeare—particularly the songs from *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*—have often been used in the theatre, and have established him as a writer of tuneful and graceful songs that show proper consideration for the words. He wrote the incidental music to *As You Like It* for the Old Vic and for Miss Italia Conti's production.

His effective little choral work *Non Nobis Domine* was first performed at the Albert Hall during the Pageant of Parliament held shortly before the Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary; and was repeated at the Jubilee commemorations arranged by the late Sir Walford Davies, then Master of the King's Music. Quilter remembers with great satisfaction and pleasure the remark made by Sir Walford: "Quilter, you've written a noble strain." He also recalls the thrilling performance by the great choir, two orchestras and the body of trumpeters from Kneller Hall.

He tells me that he likes poetry even more than music—his

preferences are for Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, Blake and Herrick—and he appreciates all good fiction from Jane Austen to Francis Brett Young. He upholds all forms of sport and athletics (though he has never been any good at them himself) with the exception of shooting and hunting, because he has never wanted to shoot or kill anything.

He loves the countryside but prefers to work in London, because he finds that his mind tends to get dull when he rusticates. "The country inspires me, but I find that the inspiration takes effect afterwards when I get back to London and am stimulated by the busy lives of the people around me."

He has always been interested in opera, but feels that as a nation we are not temperamentally suited to grand opera, and that we should do better to specialize more in the lighter forms. He is anxious that we should try to evolve a certain type of light opera, not forced and not too serious and certainly not morbid, appropriate to our national character. Part-songs, unaccompanied or otherwise, appeal strongly to him, and when I last saw him he was engaged upon a work for chorus and orchestra.

Quilter thinks that the present is a very difficult time to judge English music, though he is sure that one or two of our younger composers, particularly William Walton and Benjamin Britten, are very gifted. He thinks very highly of Walton's *Façade* and Viola Concerto.

Folk-music always stirs his sympathy, but he feels that it is dangerous to make use of it in modern music. Vaughan Williams has done so skilfully and successfully, but it is a pity that others have tried to imitate him: he has a style of his own, and attempts to copy it can never meet with much success. For settings of folk-song and dances, Quilter considers that Percy Grainger has a gift that amounts to genius: his *Molly on the Shore* for String Quartet, and *Shepherd's Hey* for orchestra are two of the most satisfying pieces he knows.

"I like all kinds of music, but not *everything* I hear" Quilter says, "I must be able to *feel* something in music."

He is a tall, grey-haired figure of distinguished appearance; shy and quietly spoken: a fascinating character but modest in the extreme. "If I had sprung from nothing out of the gutter there might have been something more interesting or romantic for you to write about" he said in his gentle, retiring manner.

Preferring a quiet, unobtrusive bachelor life, he spends most of his time in his pleasant study surrounded by manuscript paper,

books of poetry and the scores of the music he appreciates. He is a man of taste, and possesses some fine specimens of Chinese art, for which he has a great admiration.

Among the most widely appreciated of his compositions are :

OPUS 6. Three Shakespeare Songs.

*Come Away Death.*

*O Mistress Mine.*

*Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind.*

OPUS 8. Song Cycle. *To Julia.*

*The Bracelet. The Maiden Blush. To Daisies.*

*The Nightpiece. Julia's Hair. Cherry Ripe.*

OPUS 9. Serenade for Orchestra.

OPUS 10. Four Songs of Sorrow.

*A Coronal. Passing Dreams.*

*A Land of Silence. In Spring.*

OPUS 11. Three English Dances for small orchestra.

OPUS 12. Seven Elizabethan Lyrics.

*Weep you no more. My Life's Delight.*

*Damask Roses. The Faithless Shepherdess.*

*Brown is my Love. By a Fountainside.*

*Fair House of Joy.*

OPUS 14. Four Songs.

*Autumn Evening. April.*

*A last Year's Rose. Song of the Blackbird.*

OPUS 17.

*A Children's Overture for full orchestra.*

OPUS 20. Three Songs of William Blake.

*Dream Valley. The Wild Flowers' Song. Daybreak.*

OPUS 21. Suite from *As You Like It* for small orchestra.

OPUS 22. Three Pastoral Songs for Medium Voice, Piano, Violin and 'Cello.

*I will go with my father a-ploughing.*

*Cherry Valley. I wish and I wish.*

OPUS 23. Five Shakespeare Songs.

*Fear no more the heat o' the sun.*

*Under the Greenwood Tree.*

*It was a lover and his lass.*

*Take, O take those lips away.*

*Hey, ho, the wind and the rain.*

OPUS 24. Five English Love Lyrics.

*There be none of Beauty's daughters.*

*Morning Song.*

*Go, Lovely Rose.*

*O, the month of May.*

*The Time of Roses.*

OPUS 25.

*The Fuchsia Tree.*

*An old Carol.*

*Music, when soft voices die.*

## OPUS 28. Five Jacobean Lyrics.

*The Jealous Lover.*  
*Why so pale and wan.*  
*I dare not ask a kiss.*  
*To Alihea from Prison.*  
*The Constant Lover.*

## OPUS 29.

*I arise from dreams of thee.*  
(serenade for voice and orchestra).

## OPUS 30. Four Shakespeare Songs.

*Who is Sylvia.*  
*When Daffodils begin to peer.*  
*How should I your true love know.*  
*Sigh no more, ladies.*

## OPUS 31.

*Titania* (a little dream ballet for orchestra).

## OPUS 32. Two Shakespeare Songs.

*Orpheus with his lute.*  
*When icicles hang by the wall.*



# Edmund Rubbra



IT was not until his First Symphony was performed a year or two before the outbreak of the Second World War that the musical public began to look upon Edmund Rubbra as one of the hopes of English music. Hitherto, he had been regarded as little more than one of those minor English composers who write half a dozen useful little works and then fade into insignificance with the help of an appointment at one of our academic institutions. Then Sir Adrian Boult performed this symphony and thousands of music-lovers with arched eye-brows rushed to their reference books to find out more about this young composer—in most cases with no more success than our old friend Mrs. Hubbard. To add to their surprise, the *Daily Telegraph* proclaimed the symphony to be an exciting work, and the *Morning Post* went one better by describing it as a work of outstanding importance. Yet even to-day, there are thousands of musicians whose knowledge of this remarkable composer is extremely vague, to say the least.

Edmund Rubbra is of quite humble origin. He was born in Northampton on May 23rd 1901, left school when he was only fourteen and became a railway clerk. Music was the recreation in which he sought relief from his dull routine work. He had begun composing when he was only twelve, but received little encouragement until he was sixteen, when Cyril Scott happened to hear of him and immediately became interested in him. He gave him lessons for three years which culminated in the winning of a scholarship to Reading University, where he was able to study composition with Gustav Holst and the pianoforte with Howard Jones.

Later, he gained another scholarship; this time to the Royal College of Music, and thus was able to continue his studies with Holst and to work with Vaughan Williams as well. He also studied counterpoint there under R. O. Morris. Many of his earliest works were written while he was at the College: chiefly songs and small choral works.

Next, we find Rubbra earning his living as a music teacher, doing musical journalism and writing incidental music for plays.

These were the difficult years in which he was quite unknown, yet useful opportunities presented themselves occasionally, as for instance when he was able to tour Italy as a pianist, and later, when he gave a number of recitals in Paris. Incidentally, in 1933 he married Antoinette Chaplin, the gifted French violinist, whom he met on this tour.

By this time, his compositions had begun to make a favourable impression upon some of the London music publishers. Augener's accepted his Five Motets for unaccompanied choir (1934), and Universal Edition (distributed by Boosey & Hawkes Ltd.) published his *Sinfonia Concertante* for piano and orchestra (1934).

The interest aroused by the First Symphony (1935-7) became more intense when his Second Symphony, composed in 1937, was given its first performance. The *Musical Times* summed it up very well in the statement "It is not easy to think of a parallel in modern works to the fine unified span of the first movement. Arch-like construction is rare nowadays. His ideas crowd upon each other, lie on each other's backs in an urge of counterpoint. The scoring is heavily lined, and in the long run tiring to the ear. It is all rather reckless, though not in the way that word usually implies. And it is always interesting. This is not faint praise, for interest is the most lasting quality in music." The best part of this symphony, I think, is the beautiful *Adagio*, a profound meditative movement, though the stimulating counterpoint of the concluding *Rondo* is very pleasing.

The Third Symphony was to have been played at a Promenade concert in the autumn of 1940, but the war intervened, and it was heard in several provincial cities, in Sweden and America, before it could be performed in London. At Göteborg, it was given under the direction of Dr. Malcolm Sargent with great success, and after Bernard Herrmann had conducted it in America he wrote to Messrs. Boosey & Hawkes saying that the work had been very favourably received. "It is an important contribution to symphonic literature and I hope to have the opportunity of conducting it again."

There can be no doubt that this is one of the best symphonies we have had from an English composer for many years. Writing about it in the *Musical Times*, A. J. B. Hutchings declares: "Rubbra is fortunate. His youth was spent in cunning and patient observation of the very fluid state of music between the wars. He has benefited from the essays as well as from the recognized achievements of such unwearied experimenters as

Holst, Vaughan Williams, Roussel and Bloch. I have heard him discuss and admire the work of each of these men and attempt to 'look into the seeds of time and see which grain will grow, which will not'; yet he has avoided any trace either of insular modishness or of cosmopolitan pastiche. I attribute this to a personal sturdiness. Few men of my acquaintance are so genially obstinate in conversation and behaviour, and since he has allowed me to visit him, I have wondered how any less hardy mind could have avoided throwing in his lot, for aesthetic or commercial reasons, with this or that set, had his early manhood followed that of Edmund Rubbra. This particular nature has enabled him to forge for himself a highly personal musical speech . . . which belongs properly to 1940 yet would have been intelligible to Brahms." A later issue of the same journal describes the performance of the Third Symphony at Manchester thus: "Rubbra owes to the great composers of the past what every sensible composer owes to them, namely, what study and observation will give, and no more. He does not go to them for inspiration. That is entirely his own. He has now evolved a system that serves him well. His music is substantially built on a contrapuntal basis which has only one thing in common with scholastic counterpoint—the fundamental aim, the weaving together of melodic strands in such a way as to secure a satisfactory harmonic whole. Nothing is more striking in the symphony than the neatness of its texture. All four movements bear ample evidence to a workman's fastidious care of his material. Nothing has been borrowed: nothing has been put down thoughtlessly or in apparent haste. And there are moments in the slow movement when the voice is toned down to a mere whisper without losing eloquence and forcing the listener to follow its most delicate modulations. The last movement, a set of variations concluding with a substantial fugue, shows best perhaps the wealth of the composers' resources; but it is the third movement that will win the heart of the public, partly because it is absolutely sincere; partly because the courage and ability to express a deep and tender musical thought without frills and without absurd bashfulness is very far from common. After hearing the admirable interpretation of the symphony by the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Dr. Malcolm Sargent it was impossible to feel any doubt as to Mr. Rubbra's future. He is one of the men who count, and his goal is well in sight."

In 1941, Rubbra joined the Royal Artillery, and at first had to undertake clerical duties. Opportunities to compose were few,

but by using every minute of his leisure he managed to complete the great work on which he was working when he was called up—the Fourth Symphony. It was performed at a Promenade Concert in the summer of 1942, and was a tremendous success. This work, in three movements, is scored on moderate lines and dedicated to the late Sir Henry Wood. There is something refreshingly original about it: most striking of all, it is absolutely independent of all the mannerisms, colour and miscellaneous devices that one generally associates with contemporary music. Rubbra does not try to make a splash with extravagance: there is no need for anything spectacular because this beautifully-constructed symphony has a unique charm of its own.

As I write, Rubbra is engaged upon his Fifth Symphony and a Mass commissioned by the Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, but he has so little time for composition now that it is doubtful whether either of these works will be completed before he is demobilized. He is now the sergeant-in-charge of a military chamber-music ensemble which is travelling all over the country giving recitals to service men and women. His recently-completed *Soliloquy* for 'cello and small orchestra was written for William Pleeth, a member of this little group. Another minor work from his pen to be published recently was the motet *The Revival* for unaccompanied mixed choir.

Rubbra is a man of simple tastes, and loves a quiet life in the country. When he gets his leave he has but one thought: to return to the little cottage near Speen, in Buckinghamshire, where he lives with his wife and two sons. It is in a valley, and behind it there is a hill on the top of which an affluent and grateful pupil has built him an unusually pleasant cabin to which he withdraws when he wishes to compose. It is a perfect retreat: there is a piano, fireplace and a good-sized window affording a really wonderful view across the valley.

The glittering prizes of success do not attract him. He has very little interest in money and would not consider writing any form of music that did not interest him merely for the sake of remuneration. Furthermore, he is not an office-seeker, and I think it extremely unlikely that an offer of a high appointment in the educational world would appeal to him.

Rubbra is very interested in the music of the Elizabethan period, and his extensive library contains a large number of madrigals. He is an insatiable reader, chiefly of poetry, aesthetics and biography, though he occasionally delves into politics. His

taste is almost exclusively for old poetry, by the way ; he never uses modern verse in his work. Gardening, in which emerges his interest in botany, is his chief hobby.

He is an excellent pianist, and frequently conducts his own works. Of the moderns, his preferences are for Vaughan Williams and Bartók, though I could mention at least a dozen other names that mean a great deal to him. English music, its past, present and future, is a matter very near to his heart.

# Cyril Scott



THE minor works of Cyril Scott have been so successful during the past thirty years or so that ninety-per-cent of the musical public in this country regard him solely as a composer of intriguing little songs and piano pieces, and completely ignore his major compositions. This is not due entirely to obstinacy on the part of either the public or the management of our symphony orchestras, for his smaller works are more easily appreciated and, on the whole, play better than his more ambitious efforts, but I cannot help feeling that Cyril Scott has been neglected to an unwarrantable extent in recent years.

He was born at Oxton, Cheshire, on September 27th 1879 and inherited a burning love of music from his mother, who was his first teacher. At the age of twelve he went to Hoch's Conservatoire at Frankfurt to study the piano under Lazarro Uzielli, and for over four years his great ambition was to become a professional pianist. Shortly before his seventeenth birthday, however, he changed his plans completely and decided to concentrate upon composition, so instead of going to Leschetizky in Vienna as he had originally intended, he returned to Frankfurt to study composition under Iwan Knorr. In the congenial company of such other English students as Roger Quilter, Percy Grainger, Balfour Gardiner and Norman O'Neill the artistic life was so pleasant that whenever he returned home he found the polite society of the English provinces profoundly boring, and this was in no way relieved by his family's disapproval of his Bohemian mode of life. His "fantastic" ties and long hair provoked a great deal of caustic comment among the more conventional of his neighbours.

Soon after the completion of his first symphony, he returned to Germany for the first performance of it at Darmstadt. Willem de Haan had conducted the first two rehearsals, but Scott was to have conducted the final one and the performance himself. In his autobiography<sup>1</sup> he tells us that ". . . although with considerable energy I waved my arms to and fro in the air, the sounds produced from that body of players bore no resemblance whatever to my

<sup>1</sup> *My Years of Indiscretion.*

symphony—for all one could tell they might still have been tuning their instruments. They looked at me, it is true, but the more they looked, the more bewildered they became. It was useless for me to glance at Herr de Haan for some light on the matter—he sat in immovable discomfiture in the corner of the room, his face shaded by his hand. I was dumbfounded; and in the hopes of bringing my players into line, waved my arms about even more energetically than before, but all to no purpose. Then, with a burning face I realised the truth: I had never learnt to beat time!"

Eventually, Scott appealed to de Haan to conduct for him, and then everything went smoothly. The symphony had a mixed reception: half of the audience applauded; the other half hissed, though it made a good impression upon the conductor of the Frankfurt Palmengarten symphony concerts, who expressed a desire to give the second performance of the work, but never did.

His student days over, Scott was persuaded by his friends to give a piano recital in Liverpool and then to set up as a teacher of that instrument in the same city. His father gave him a hundred pounds so that he could take rooms and make a start. The net result of the recital, however, was a couple of pupils and an old gentleman who paid him half-a-guinea an hour to play Bach to him once a week.

A friend then arranged for him to meet Richter. Scott called on the eminent conductor and played him his *Heroic Suite*. While he was so doing, Richter uttered such ejaculations as "most original", "finely orchestrated", "splendid harmonies" and so forth, and finally informed Scott that he had written a great work. Shortly afterwards, Richter performed the Suite at Manchester and Liverpool, and although it was not particularly successful, Scott soon became a personal friend of the conductor.

Messrs. Boosey & Co. (as the firm was then known) published a number of Scott's early songs, but just as the young composer felt that he was establishing himself, Arthur Boosey sent for him and exclaimed bluntly: "I daresay you are quite clever, but your things don't sell. You must consider our arrangement at an end." This sudden disappointment might have had a serious effect upon Scott's work, but fortunately Mr. W. W. A. Elkin asked to see him, and he eventually became not only Scott's publisher but a personal friend for many years.

Soon after the outbreak of the Great War, Scott stayed for a little while with Bernard Shaw and his wife at an hotel at Torquay. He still remembers that the great dramatist had just received an

offer of five hundred pounds to go to America and deliver a single lecture at the Carnegie Hall, but had refused it because he couldn't see how the promoters could make such a lecture pay, and he wouldn't have liked them to be out of pocket on his account!

Scott volunteered for military service on several occasions but was rejected as physically unfit, and had to be content with playing the piano at concerts in aid of war charities. During the war years he wrote several anonymous books on occult philosophy as well as a great deal of music.

His opera *The Alchemist* was written in 1918, and as soon as Sir Thomas Beecham saw it he promised to have it produced at Covent Garden, but for years it was dogged by bad luck. Beecham went bankrupt before he could fulfil his promise, and then after all arrangements had been made for its production at Wiesbaden, the opera house was burnt to the ground just before the opening night. Eventually it was performed at Essen on May 28th 1925.

In the autumn of 1920 Scott went to America to play his own works and to lecture. His impressions of the United States are all recorded in *My Years of Indiscretion*, and therefore I do not propose to write at length on the subject here. He was very surprised, for instance, to find that the people of New York never bothered to draw the blinds of their bedroom windows when undressing at night, and from his own room the prospect of no less than a hundred and sixty illuminated bedrooms was disconcerting, to say the least.

He still recalls the sort of timetable that was worked out for him: two days and two nights in a train, the recital or lecture to be given immediately on arrival, and then another two days and nights of travelling! It was on such a tour as this that he met a poetess who smoked strong black cigars and read "shockers" by the dozen.

The American love of music, he found, was sincere and deep-rooted. They were prepared to pay handsomely for their music, and it was encouraging to find successful business men spending their money not upon yachts or racehorses, but in the endowment of symphony orchestras or opera. One of the few annoyances he had to endure was the type of person who asked him what he thought of Beethoven, or Bach, or some celebrity of the hour. Scott thinks that such questions are foolish. What would a parson say, for instance, if someone came up and asked him "What do you think of Moses?"

Of Scott's earlier works, I suppose *A Blackbird Song* and



*Daffodils* are still the most popular, but when people refer to him merely as the composer of the "song about the blackbird" he wishes that the blackbird were at the bottom of the deepest ocean. The best of the earlier works is undoubtedly *Sphinx*, which I am told was a favourite with Ravel. Other notable compositions are his *Lotusland*, a richly oriental work which Kreisler later arranged for the violin, the colourful collections of pieces entitled *Poems* and *Rainbow Trout*, and his brilliant *Sonnet I*, a most original work in irregular rhythm. His *Chinese Songs*, by the way, provoked C. V. Stanford to a tirade of indignation.

When a well-known singing professor heard Scott's setting of *An Old Song Ended* he asked him how he could write such peculiar and discordant harmonies to so simple and beautiful a lyric! Of his later works, his *Two Songs without words*, and *Mist* and *Rain* are particularly effective.

Scott's *Ode to Great Men* was performed at the Norwich Festival in 1936, but this impressive work for orator, female chorus and orchestra fell short of expectations as far as reviving interest in the composer's major works was concerned.

His Piano Concerto has always been warmly received wherever it has been heard, yet he is amazed to find that concert promoters of the present day still regard it as a work upon which they might be involved in financial loss. For that reason he doubts whether the British composer gets a fair chance of being heard. The neglect, he believes, is partly due to the commercialization of music.

Scott admits that the music of Beethoven makes little or no appeal to him, and he feels that the work of many of the lesser-known Russian composers compares favourably with that of Tschaikowsky. It is also his opinion that long after the death of Queen Victoria, British music was asphyxiated by Victorian propriety and correctitude. He readily admits that the BBC has done good work in taking music to the masses, but he feels that in so doing it has "cheapened" music, because people regard it now as something "on tap" like the water in their kitchens, and respect it accordingly.

# Michael Tippett



UNTIL his extraordinary oratorio *A Child of our Time* created a minor sensation in the world of music a year or two ago, Michael Tippett was an obscure young composer almost unknown outside London.

As his striking appearance suggests, he comes of a Cornish family, although he was actually born in London in 1905. His parents were not particularly interested in music, and as his early days were spent in the depths of the country without the influence of either the gramophone or the radio, it is surprising to learn that his ambition to be a composer originated in childhood. Even when he was very small he was a good pianist, and his memories of music-making in boyhood are completely dominated by the Forty-eight Preludes of Bach and the Beethoven Sonatas. He was educated at Stamford Grammar School, and the lack of musical environment in his schooldays may be appreciated from the fact that when he went to the Royal College of Music at the age of seventeen, he had heard only one symphony in his life. Realizing the deficiencies in his musical education, he attended every Promenade concert of the season during his first year at the College.

He studied composition under Charles Wood, and became very interested in conducting, for which he went to Sir Adrian Boult and Dr. Malcolm Sargent. For Charles Wood, especially, he had a great admiration, and he realizes now how much he learnt from that gifted composer. Later, he went back to the College specially to study with R. O. Morris.

During his student days, Tippett had no idea of how a living could be made as a composer, yet he always kept this ambition foremost in his mind, and we shall see in a moment how he deliberately restricted his other musical activities so that he could have sufficient time to write. He understood, of course, that experience with choral societies would be helpful, and accepted an appointment as conductor of a small choral society that had recently been formed at Oxted. Since then, he has always had a choir, if not an orchestra, of his own.

Those early days at Oxted provided experience of great value

in his development as a composer: he wrote little operettas expressly for his choir and produced them personally. Being obliged to earn his own living, he also took small teaching appointments in local schools, but he was determined that work of this nature should not interfere with his composing, and he made up his mind to live an extremely austere life so that he could manage with the barest minimum of money. I suppose in these sophisticated times few people find anything very romantic in the old story of the composer starving in a garret and composing masterpieces, but I think it worth recording that for many years Michael Tippett lived frugally on a tiny income solely because he felt he simply had to write music. He refused many teaching appointments because he knew that the curriculum of school life would preclude long periods of undisturbed composition. Only in recent years—and he is now forty years of age—have circumstances made it possible for him to lead an ordinary life, to marry, if he chooses, and so forth. I cannot help feeling that the element of personal sacrifice in his life is to some extent reflected in his compositions.

In 1933 he became interested in the work of adult education, and associated himself with the rehearsal orchestra that was being maintained at Morley College to enable unemployed professional musicians to keep in practice. His work as conductor of this ensemble gave him ample opportunity to become acquainted with the less glamorous side of the musical profession. Frequent concerts were given for the benefit of these unemployed professionals, and such eminent artists as Dame Myra Hess, Harriet Cohen, Solomon and Cyril Smith gave their services gladly to help the men. Other activities at Morley College included the running of choral classes and lectures on musical appreciation. For several years Tippett also wrote and arranged the music for special performances given by large numbers of school-children under the auspices of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society's Education Department.

Morley College was destroyed in the air-raids of September 1940, and when the Director of Music was evacuated from London, Michael Tippett was asked to take over his duties. This offer gave Tippett a splendid opportunity of performing the music in which he was especially interested, and the great extension of the work of the College, despite the difficulties of inadequate alternative accommodation, is in itself a tribute to his exceptional ability and endless enthusiasm.

Michael Tippett is anxious to see English music taking its

proper place in the culture of Europe, and insists that we must make special efforts to take full advantage of the opportunities that will be available as soon as the war-ravaged nations settle down to a normal life of peace. He has tremendous faith in English music—particularly in that of the Elizabethan and Restoration periods, for in those days, when poetry and music flowered together, it was an integral part of European culture. The music of Byrd, Gibbons, Dowland, Purcell, and other great composers of their day has yet to be fully appreciated, though with the development of education the world will probably in time regard it with the same respect as it shows to the work of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Dekker, Ben Jonson, Dryden and suchlike.

We have to work, Tippettt believes, for a common European culture, for the new movement in all the arts will be towards that end. We need not fear that English music would lose its individuality. As an example of the appalling neglect of the Tudor and Restoration composers by our academic institutions, Tippettt told me that while he was at the Royal College of Music he was never taught to set words to music from English models: such English masters as Purcell were never considered. When the staff required models for the setting of English words to music, they turned to Bach and Brahms!

Tippettt's ideas are of course part of his general idealistic and humanitarian credo. He is a pacifist, and went to prison for three months during the early years of the Second World War for failing to comply with the conditions of his registration as a conscientious objector. Several eminent musicians endorsed the appeal that Dr. R. Vaughan Williams made on Tippettt's behalf, although they were not in sympathy with his views. It seems rather extraordinary that although hundreds of musicians, artists, actors and even variety performers were allowed to follow their calling in preference to military service merely by accepting contracts with C.E.M.A. and E.N.S.A., this composer, whose work has undoubtedly enriched the cultural life of the nation, should have been sent to prison.

Before I proceed to write of his compositions, I ought to record that Tippettt is also interested in modern dance music. He believes that the sounds of jazz are affecting our ears, and also our methods of singing and playing: hence it must ultimately affect the art of music.

His first major work was the Symphony in B-flat, which, because he was almost unknown when it was written (1934) never

reached the ears of the wider musical public. His First String Quartet was written in the following year; a work of unusual interest in that its Adagio movement is intensely emotional without being sentimental. It was first performed by the Brosa Quartet in November 1938. More recently, this quartet was revised and considerably improved by the substitution of an opening Allegro for the first two movements of the original.

The Sonata for Piano, first performed by Miss Phyllis Sellick seven years ago, is a remarkably well conceived work that with the Second String Quartet (1942) formed the basis of an appreciation written by William Glock in the *Observer*. This illuminating article explains how Tippett "explores deliberately from Pérolin to Hindemith and from plainsong to jazz and negro spirituals." Referring to the Second Quartet, Glock says "... he uses madrigal technique for the first movement, fugue for the second, formal repetitions and jazz for the scherzo, and what he calls the 'Beethoven-tradition drama' for the finale. The Piano Sonata has an equal range of style and an equal unity. In both works, I think, the first and third movements are the most important: they contain what is essentially original in Tippett's music." Glock then proceeds to describe this originality thus: "First and foremost, it is a new sense of rhythm gained chiefly from a new relationship with music outside the Viennese period and all that can be connected with it. The first movement of the Piano Sonata is studded with formidable time signatures . . . yet the result is perfectly natural because every factor in the music conspires towards the same end. To regularize the barlines would be to reduce the composer's intentions to nonsense. The freedom is for the ear and not merely for the eye. Together with the buoyant and thrusting rhythm, both here and in the string quartet, is an extreme simplicity of melodic line and (especially in the sonata) of harmonic progression."

The Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra, written in 1939, is a masterly work based on a theme by Handel, and in the same year Tippett completed his Concerto for Double String Orchestra, which was first performed in April 1943 and described by *The Times* as "... a well knit, skilfully contrived composition, in which intricacy of detail in rhythm and texture was made to serve the ends of a larger design . . . a successful essay in music as both thought and pattern." Like the First String Quartet, this Concerto has a really beautiful slow movement. It was first broadcast in March 1944.

Tippett's greatest work up to the present time is, of course, the oratorio that has brought his name before the larger musical public as well as the select circles: *A Child of our Time*. This work, completed in 1940, "springs from an impassioned protest against the conditions that make persecution possible," to quote the composer's own words. "I was very much affected by Grynspan's shooting of vom Rath at the German Legation in Paris in the autumn of 1938" Tippett declares. Grynspan, it will be recalled, was a Jewish boy who, unable to obtain official papers of identity, was living as a refugee with his uncle and aunt. He was distracted by the persecution of his mother, and eventually killed vom Rath; whereupon the Nazis started the most terrible pogrom ever known. (Incidentally, after the fall of France, Grynspan was handed over to the Nazis by the Vichy authorities, and has never been heard of since).

Michael Tippett wrote his own libretto for this work, and explains: "The recurring pattern here is that by which an outcast is thrown up for one moment by the forces of history and by his personal fate, as protagonist opposite the tyrant, the man of destiny." The first part deals with the difficulties of minorities and individuals unaccepted by the ruling conventions of modern life; the second part introduces *The Child* "enmeshed in the drama of his personal fate and the elemental social forces of our day"; and the third part is a meditation upon a potential solution. In place of the conventional chorales, Tippett uses five negro spirituals which are singularly appropriate to the general mood of the work as a whole.

The oratorio is scored for four soloists, chorus and orchestra; the bass soloist being the narrator. It is a profoundly moving work, particularly in some of the more emotional passages, such as the solos "I have no money for my love" (tenor), "How can I cherish my man in such days?" (soprano), and "The soul of man is impassioned like a woman" (alto). It was first performed on March 19th 1944 at the Adelphi Theatre under the direction of Walter Goehr, with Joan Cross, Margaret McArthur, Peter Pears, Roderick Lloyd, the Morley College and London Civil Defence choirs, and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Another performance, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, was broadcast on January 17th 1945, and it was repeated with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Albert Hall on February 28th in aid of the children of Warsaw.

# William Walton



STILL in his early forties is William Walton, another of our contemporary composers whose works are now being played all over the world. He was born at Oldham, Lancashire, on March 29th 1902, son of a music teacher, and proved to be unusually sensitive to music when he was a child.

Throughout his boyhood the music of Handel exercised a strange charm upon him, and he spent many hours in turning up this composer's songs and learning to sing them. His father taught him to play the piano, but he showed no great interest in this instrument during his childhood: he infinitely preferred the violin. It was his voice, however, that started him on his musical career. At the age of ten he won a choral scholarship to Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and became a chorister there under Dr. H. G. Ley. He says that at school he was bad at almost everything except music.

He began composing when he was about thirteen, writing chiefly hymn tunes and anthems, and then he began to take rather more interest in the piano, so he went to Dr. Basil Allchin for lessons. His outstanding musical ability came to the notice of Sir Hugh Allen, who from that time followed the boy's progress with great interest. Some idea of his precocity in music may be gained from the fact that he passed the first part of the Mus. B. examination when he was only fifteen. He did not matriculate until he was sixteen, and when he became an undergraduate it was chiefly through the influence of the Dean of Christ Church, who was anxious that he should take a degree. While he was at Oxford his friendship with Edward J. Dent brought him into touch with Busoni, who gave him valuable advice. He also met Ernest Ansermet, and through Sacheverell Sitwell soon became one of the most popular guests of the eminent Sitwell family.

It is both interesting and highly significant that from the age of sixteen Walton was entirely self-taught: he felt no inclination whatever to spend years at the feet of eminent composers, and least of all, those of other countries. He has always known his own mind, and has always been determined to follow his own

course in music. He wrote a great deal at Oxford, but scrapped most of it shortly afterwards: the only works of this early period now surviving are a Litany for soprano, alto, tenor and bass written in 1916 and two songs composed during the last year of the war, *Tritons* (words by William Drummond) and a setting of Swinburne's poem *The Winds*.

Having said that, I must hasten to add that his Piano Quartet was started when he was only sixteen, but it was not finished until two or three years later. Shortly before his twenty-first birthday he sent it to the Carnegie Trust in the hope that they would publish it. To his horror it was lost in the post! For two whole years it was maturing in the hands of the G.P.O. but eventually reached its destination. After he had given up all hope, the Trust published it in 1924, describing it in their report as being "clear and transparent in texture, restrained in feeling, well-written throughout, and rising at moments of climax into a strain of great beauty and nobility. It is a work of real achievement."

In the meantime, he had completed his *Façade* in its original version: a very clever setting of poems by Edith Sitwell that was first performed privately in Chelsea, but later at the Aeolian Hall. Since that time it has undergone many revisions, and has also been adapted for ballet purposes. It originated from an idea for which the Sitwell family were responsible. They painted a huge head on a curtain, with a large mouth fitted with a megaphone through which these poems by Edith Sitwell were recited. The music was required for a general accompaniment or background. Little did they realize that Walton's effort would become so popular. The original music was scored for flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, 'cello and percussion, but it was afterwards made into an orchestral suite. It was used during a ballet season at the Lyceum in 1927, and first heard as a concert piece at the Leeds Festival in the following year.

Walton's next important work was the String Quartet, which made a very favourable impression upon the International Society for Contemporary Music despite the fact that Ernest Newman described it as "horrible." It was first performed under that Society's auspices at the Salzburg Festival in 1923.

Two years later Walton composed his famous overture *Portsmouth Point*, and the credit for giving the first performance must once again go to the International Society for Contemporary Music: it was a tremendous success at their Zürich Festival in 1926. This excellent work won him many thousands of admirers



when it was brought home and performed almost immediately as an interlude by Diaghilev's Russian Ballet at His Majesty's Theatre. In the same year it was first performed at the Queen's Hall. Undoubtedly one of the best modern orchestral works of its type, *Portsmouth Point* was inspired by a print of that name by Thomas Rowlandson, the eighteenth-century English caricaturist, who depicted a lively scene of merrymaking at the waterside between the old Ship Tavern and the money-lender's premises. In the background there are several stately sailing ships. The rollicking fun in this scene—chiefly concerning the seafaring men and their lady friends—is cleverly portrayed in Walton's music. It has been revised slightly in more recent years.

In 1926 he wrote *Siesta* for chamber orchestra, which was first performed that autumn under the direction of Guy Warrack at one of the concerts being run by that conductor at the Aeolian Hall. Then if we pass over various minor works, many of which he has now withdrawn, the next of Walton's more important works is his *Sinfonia Concertante* for piano and orchestra which was first heard at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert in 1928 with York Bowen as the soloist. It is in three movements dedicated to Osbert, Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell respectively.

One of the best works we have ever had from Walton was the Concerto for Viola and Orchestra ; a remarkable work in three movements which was conducted by the composer himself when it was first played in London. The occasion was a Promenade concert on October 3rd 1929, and Paul Hindemith was the soloist : the critics were almost unanimous in their praise, and as a result, it was chosen for the festival of the I.S.C.M. at Liège in 1930, when Lionel Tertis played the solo part. This concerto contains some very fine writing in the dynamic, colourful style that Walton has made his own, and will undoubtedly stay in the repertoire of the leading artists for generations.

I suppose it was inevitable that Walton should follow the example of most of the older English composers and write an oratorio. There was a time when no English composer was considered to have "arrived" unless he had swept the dust off the family bible and dredged in it for a libretto ; indeed it was one of the very few means he had of making a reputation (unless he had a foreign name), for the choral societies were then in their prime. But how different was Walton's effort from those that oozed from the pens of our Victorian composers. *Belshazzar's Feast* was introduced at the Leeds Festival in 1931 by Dr. Malcolm Sargent,

and repeated in London soon afterwards. The text was compiled from the scriptures by Sir Osbert Sitwell, and the whole work dedicated to Lord Berners. This amazing oratorio demands a huge orchestra to provide the barbaric colour to the tumultuous pæans of the heathen, for in addition to all the usual instruments of a full symphony orchestra, an alto saxophone, E-flat military clarinet, and if possible, a couple of brass bands are required! The percussion department has to be augmented by a tambourine, glockenspiel, gong, xylophone, anvil, slapstick and Chinese block. The piano is used merely as an orchestral instrument, by the way. Owing to the "unsuitability" of certain passages of the text, this work was rejected when efforts were made to get it performed at one of the Three Choirs Festivals. Commenting on a performance of it, William McNaught said in the *Musical Times* "The oats may be wild, but they are British. Our Mr. Walton has written a thrilling work out of a music that is entirely his own."

Much of his time during the next few years was spent in working out his Symphony, one of his most adventurous efforts. It took considerably longer than he had anticipated, and he allowed Sir Hamilton Harty to perform its first three movements at a concert given by the London Symphony Orchestra on December 3rd 1934, much to the surprise of many of his friends, for very few composers permit the performance of uncompleted works. The final movement was written some time afterwards, and the first performance of the complete symphony was given at a BBC concert in the Queen's Hall on November 6th 1935, under the direction of Sir Hamilton Harty.

The success of this symphony brought Walton into the front rank of British composers, a position well summed up in the *Musical Times* in March 1937 by A. J. B. Hutchings with the words: "There can be few more effective ways of realising the debt which English music owes to Walton than to imagine what it would be without him. In Bax the youngsters see one whose fecundity and brilliance they admire, but one who does not pretend to lead them anywhere. Without him or William Walton, all-British programmes during the past decade would have shown little advance from the emasculated preciousness which has been served in Paris since the war. There would have been, not attenuated Debussy, but Delius and water (although Vaughan Williams and vinegar was the taste of most of the post-war academicians who had lived thirty years and seen the futility of it); for dessert there would have been Handel with a few wrong notes, or

an at-all-costs-decent cantata on a Greek text, begotten by Stravinsky out of Bliss. Yet to-day, English music holds a place of dignity and distinction, with promise of a rising school of composers under an exemplary leader . . . When all is allowed for insular prejudice, one can say for certain that we shall from now wait for every new work of Walton, as we once did of Sibelius, in the certainty of getting something of permanent value."

If a general note may be interposed here, it is perhaps worth recording that Walton joined the music committee of the British Council in 1933, and it was at about this time that he began to take an interest in film music. In the ensuing year he wrote the score for the film *Escape Me Never*, and has been associated with the film industry ever since. He has written the music for such films as *As You Like It* (1936); *Major Barbara* and *Next of Kin* (1941); *The First of the Few*, for which he wrote his famous *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue*; and *Went the Day Well* (1942). His latest at the time of writing is the excellent score he has written for *Henry V*, in which he had to capture the musical atmosphere of the period without producing a pseudo-Tudor effect. He succeeded in embodying sequences of plainsong and the Agincourt Song into a remarkably effective and dramatic score: a masterpiece of virile English music. Particularly noteworthy is the quaint and singularly appropriate music that accompanies the scene in the old Globe Theatre, and the fine passacaglia played at the death-bed of Falstaff (George Robey).

The advent of the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth inspired Walton to write his splendid march *Crown Imperial*, a tremendously popular Elgarian work commissioned by the BBC and first played by their Symphony Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult on May 9th 1937. It is scored on generous lines and provides for the addition of an organ at the end. At about the same time he wrote his cantata *In Honour of the City of London*, a setting of words by the Scottish poet William Dunbar (circa 1460-1520).

In 1938 Walton wrote a second suite for his *Faade*, and then Heifetz commissioned the Violin Concerto, reserving it exclusively for his own performance for two years, so in the spring of 1939 Walton went to America to confer with the great violinist. The concerto was completed in New York on June 2nd 1939 and first performed in the following December at Cleveland, Ohio, with Artur Rodzinski conducting. About eighteen months later the score was sent to England for a performance at the Albert Hall,

but it was lost on the journey over owing to enemy action. Fortunately, a photographic copy had been made in New York, and this was flown to London in time for a performance given under the auspices of the Royal Philharmonic Society on November 1st 1941, when Henry Holst was the soloist. Walton conducted personally, and a criticism worth quoting was the one written by McNaught in the following month's issue of the *Musical Times*. "This is a difficult work for the listener. The composer's vocabulary has advanced since his Viola Concerto. It has probably become more chromatic, if the test be a counting of accidentals; certainly if the test be the impression on the ear . . . there are many solitary clumps of incompatible notes; there is more independence and incongruence among the lines of counterpoint, and the music is very contrapuntal. In short, the technique has been screwed up to a higher pitch." The majority of listeners, McNaught feared, would find some difficulty in appreciating certain parts of this concerto, and he concluded "Walton is important to us, not only as one who has sought out new things in the art of music, but as one who has helped towards the growth of that modern phenomenon, the enjoyment of British music by a British audience; and we may view with apprehension any signs that in the search for his inmost self he is likely to lose touch with a large part of the audience. We want to hear the crowds, not the groups, saying how much they enjoyed the latest Walton. Perhaps a quarter of the music in the Violin Concerto provokes such thoughts as these. The remainder of it is music to be thankful for, toughness and all. A great deal of what Walton has to say really calls for his highly wrought vocabulary and could not shape itself otherwise . . . Speaking generally, the Concerto is a work for British music to be proud of. Granted the idiom and the means and plane of expression, the work explores its orbit with completeness and mastery. So many modern works mark out an orbit and then get lost in it."

Among Walton's minor works we find his *Scapino*, a comedy overture suggested by an etching from Jacques Callot's *Balli di Sfessania* (1622); the *Music for Children* (1941), which is an orchestration of two books of children's duets written a year or so previously; the incidental music to *Macbeth* and to a radio play *Christopher Columbus*. In 1943 he wrote *The Quest*, a ballet for the Sadler's Wells Company.

# Ralph Vaughan Williams



**B**Y his use of English folksong, Ralph Vaughan Williams has quietly revealed to the world that our national music has roots in the past as strong and wholesome as those of the music of any other nation. Nationalism in music is a subject that must be treated with discretion and modesty in a world of musicians who are becoming more and more insistent that art is international, but it must be said that those who look upon English music as little more than a series of mushroom growths of the last fifty or sixty years ignore a remarkable, if chequered, tradition. They tell us in a slightly patronizing tone that there was nobody in English music before Elgar, and completely ignore not only the "school" that produced Elgar, but the great Tudors and the wealth of folksong that is our heritage. Such names as Byrd, Gibbons and Purcell mean nothing to them. It is therefore fortunate that one of our greatest living composers recognizes the value of English folksong, and is proud to make use of it in his own works.

Vaughan Williams was born in the little Gloucestershire parish of Down Ampney on October 12th 1872, the son of a clergyman. He was educated at Charterhouse, and for two years attended the Royal College of Music before he proceeded to Trinity College, Cambridge, to study composition with Charles Wood and the organ with Alan Gray. When he got his Mus.Bac. he returned to the Royal College of Music for a further two years' course, because he was under no obligation to earn a livelihood. He studied under Stanford and Parry, and continued to specialize in composition.

At the College he was always more interested in the organ than the piano, but regarded both merely as convenient instruments to use when studying. This accounts for one of the finest features in his many superb compositions: the freedom from the fetters of the keyboard. The piano has had little influence upon his work.

After completing this further course of study in London he visited Bayreuth to bask in the music of Wagner for a while, and then returned to become the organist of South Lambeth Church,

but he did not allow this appointment to keep him in a rut, for he spent much of his time in Berlin studying at the Akademie der Künste. He also became one of Max Bruch's pupils.

He now dislikes most of the music he wrote in those early days, and has withdrawn it from circulation. It represents an embryonic stage in which he was rarely satisfied with anything he produced. He was groping in the dark for some definite line upon which to work, and found little to help or guide him in the academic training he had received. Then shortly before he took his doctorate at Cambridge in 1901 a new field of vision settled his course for him: he discovered the true beauty of English folksong.

Without further delay he began an extensive research into the subject and unearthed dozens of lovely old melodies that had long been forgotten—if they had ever been known—by the academics. Much of his research was done in Norfolk, and at about the same time, Cecil Sharp was collecting the folk-tunes of Somerset. Living a simple life in the country and mixing freely with the unsophisticated people around him inspired his *Three Norfolk Rhapsodies*. The first was given its earliest performance at the Queen's Hall in 1906: the other two were first heard at the Cardiff Festival in the following year. In these lovely rhapsodies we see that Vaughan Williams was not content merely to discover and publish the folksongs: he made them the basis of his own idiom, adroitly weaving them in a free style, forming unusual harmonies that gave the rhapsodies a sense of great colour and feeling.

As his work progressed he found in folk-music a strange fascination and satisfaction; and because it helped him to express himself, it quite naturally exerted a marked influence upon all his compositions, not only as far as melody is concerned, but also in rhythm and tonality.

He joined the Folksong Society in 1904 and shortly afterwards began the arduous task of editing the music of the *English Hymnal*. Much could be written about his work on this book, but perhaps the most important fact is that noting the inadequacy of the tunes available for Bishop How's famous hymn *For all the Saints*, Vaughan Williams wrote the magnificent tune *Sine Nomine*. It has now become the delight of choirs all over the country.

Vaughan Williams was still more or less unknown to the majority of musical folk in England at that time, and it was not until his choral work *Toward the Unknown Region* (a setting of Walt Whitman's words) was given its first performance at the

Leeds Festival in 1907 that the general musical public began to realize that a new English composer had "arrived."

Then he sprang a surprise upon many of his associates: he went to Paris to study with Maurice Ravel. Whatever he gained from this course did nothing to affect his style, for when Gervase Elwes sang his new setting of the poem *On Wenlock Edge* (from A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*) in 1909, it was apparent to all that Vaughan Williams's characteristically English style remained unchanged. This was confirmed when Sir Thomas Beecham gave the first performance of his *Fantasia on a theme of Tallis* at the Queen's Hall in the same year, and by his incidental music to *The Wasps* (Aristophanes), which was first heard at Cambridge shortly after Vaughan Williams's return from Paris. The jolly overture to *The Wasps* is now a favourite concert piece.

During these years a much greater work was taking shape: *A Sea Symphony* (words by Whitman), for soprano, baritone, choir and orchestra, which was first heard at the Leeds Festival in 1910. The success of this symphony firmly established him as one of the most promising of the younger school of English composers. It might also be added here that Vaughan Williams has always been a great admirer of the work of Walt Whitman.

In the four years that followed, the greater part of his time was taken up in the composition of the famous *London Symphony* and his ballad opera *Hugh the Drover*, for the only other works he produced at this stage in his career were comparatively minor compositions such as his *Five Mystical Songs*, which were first heard at the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester in 1911; his *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, first performed at the same festival in 1912; three motets, *O Praise the Lord*, *O Clap your Hands*, and *Lord, Thou hast been our refuge*; and his *Fantasy Quintet* for strings (1914).

On March 27th 1914, the *London Symphony* was given its first performance at the Queen's Hall under the conductorship of Geoffrey Toye. It made a tremendous impression upon the music critics, in fact one of them was inspired to declare "It is here, surely, that Vaughan Williams has reached a height of sublimity scaled only by Wordsworth." In another appreciative but rather curious tribute, Philip Hale, writing in the *Boston Herald* said "The man that has written the mysterious introduction of this symphony, expressed loneliness and tragic shabbiness in the second movement, the cruelty of the great city in the finale, is more than an accomplished musician: he is a rare poet of tone."

Then the Great War intervened, and Vaughan Williams, forty-two years of age, volunteered for the Army. He became an orderly in the R.A.M.C. and served in Macedonia from 1916 to 1917. On his return to England he was offered a commission, and although he had no military ambitions of any kind, he felt obliged to accept it. After a course in heavy gunnery he went to France and served throughout the exacting 1918 campaign as a lieutenant.

Sir Hugh Allen, who had succeeded Sir Hubert Parry as Director of the Royal College of Music, approached Vaughan Williams as soon as he was demobilized and offered him a position on the teaching staff of the College. Two years later he became conductor of the Bach Choir, and if his activities as a composer were not far more important, his work in connection with these two appointments would alone be evidence of musical genius well applied, for a surprisingly large number of the most promising young composers we have to-day were his pupils.

The year 1919 is also significant for a magnificent performance of his *Sea Symphony* at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, under the direction of Sir Hugh Allen, when Vaughan Williams was given an honorary degree of Doctor of Music.

In the following year the first annual congress of the British Music Society (founded in 1918; disbanded in 1933) required a major British work that could be performed as the most significant composition of that time. Their choice fell upon Vaughan Williams's *London Symphony*, and after certain revisions had been made, a splendid performance was given at the Queen's Hall on May 4th 1920 with Albert Coates conducting. This shortened version has now been adopted universally.

The *London Symphony*, which is widely appreciated in most foreign countries, seems to have found a special corner for itself in the hearts of music lovers all over the English-speaking world. There may of course be nostalgic reasons, but I am told that in musical circles in many of the most remote corners of the earth, it is regarded with a feeling that amounts to pure reverence. There must indeed be few who cannot appreciate this vivid musical picture; few who cannot perceive something more than the sombre colours described by Mr. Hale in the *Boston Herald*. Apart from the obvious Westminster chimes, we hear the cry of the lavender seller, the jingle of the bells on a hansom cab, and other sounds that remind the older listener of London in those confident days before



the Great War. Here and there we get a wonderful impression of the general hubbub of the capital.

It was at about this time that the public first heard what has now become one of Vaughan Williams's most popular works: *The Lark Ascending*. This Romance for violin and orchestra had been composed in 1914 but had been laid aside, and throughout the Great War remained unperformed. It was given its *première* at the Queen's Hall on June 14th 1921 under the conductorship of Adrian Boult, with Marie Hall playing the solo part.

Then came the *Pastoral Symphony*. For years the influence of folk-music had been at work within him and it culminated in a desire to express in a major composition all that the rural life of England meant to him. It was completed in November 1921, and was first performed under the auspices of the Royal Philharmonic Society at the Queen's Hall on January 26th 1922 under the baton of Adrian Boult, with outstanding success. Percy Grainger described this symphony in four movements as "the most successful essay under this title by any composer." It is a difficult work demanding the utmost skill on the part of the conductor, and its mystical element is not easily understood by the average listener until it has been heard at least two or three times. When one really understands it, the deep poetical pensiveness of this symphony is profoundly moving.

In the same year *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains*, his setting in one act of a scene from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, was first performed at the Royal College of Music, but this never became as popular as his ballad opera *Hugh the Drover*—a wonderful picture of the English countryside—which after years of neglect was taken up by the R.C.M. and produced in their Parry Memorial Theatre in 1924. It made a deep impression upon representatives of the British National Opera Company, and they decided almost immediately to put it on at His Majesty's Theatre with Malcolm Sargent conducting. The libretto, by the way, had been written by Harold Child, the well-known author and journalist, over ten years previously.

The Mass in G-minor appeared in 1923 and was first sung (liturgically) at Westminster Cathedral under the direction of Dr. R. R. Terry, but it has now become more of a concert work in the repertoire of our leading choral societies.

The next twelve years brought us a variety of works from the pen of Vaughan Williams, including *Job*, a masque for dancing, the Piano Concerto and *Sancta Civitas*, an oratorio. Another

opera *Sir John in Love*, based upon *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and rich in folk-music, was produced at the Royal College of Music in the spring of 1929, but failed to find its way into the ordinary "commercial" theatre on account of its inadequate characterization. At least, that is what I am told; though the history of opera in this country suggests that most operas from the pens of living British composers are automatically branded as "commercially unsuitable for production" unless they are of the lightest musical-comedy type (in which case they could not be described honestly as operas) and provide for an ample display of the chorus-girls' legs.

In 1935, when people were beginning to feel that he had become settled in his outlook and idiom, Vaughan Williams caused a great sensation in the world of music by producing his Symphony No. 4 in F-minor; a work as modern, striking and stark as one would expect from a man thirty years his junior. Since that time nobody has known what to expect from him: the list of some of his other compositions at the end of this sketch will give the reader some idea of his versatility. We find him now writing music for films despite the fact that he is over seventy years of age.

His *Five Variants on Dives and Lazarus*, dedicated to the people of America, was one of the three works commissioned by the British Council to represent modern English music. Its *première* was at the New York World Fair in June 1939 under Sir Adrian Boult.

Since the outbreak of the Second World War his most important composition has been the Symphony No. 5 in D, which was first played at a Promenade concert in the Albert Hall on June 24th 1943. This is a symphony very, very different from his No. 4 in F-minor; it is much less striking, but possesses a charm of its own due to the pastoral atmosphere of the greater part of it. Its movements are Preludio and Allegro; Scherzo, Romanza and Passacaglia; the light Scherzo being perhaps the most beautiful.

Other recent works include an unaccompanied motet *Valiant for Truth* (words by John Bunyan), published in 1942; and *The New Commonwealth*, a setting of Harold Child's poem, which is an adaptation of the prelude taken from the music that Vaughan Williams wrote a couple of years ago for the film *Forty-ninth Parallel*.

To mark the end of the war in Europe, Dr. Vaughan Williams wrote a *Thanksgiving for Victory*, for soprano solo, orator, choras and orchestra. This work, commissioned by the

BBC, was first performed in a broadcast on "VE-day," May 8th, 1945.

To complete this sketch I must now go back a decade or so to add a few details which will show that Vaughan Williams has never buried himself in his composition to the exclusion of all other interests in music. His work for the Folksong Society has already been mentioned, but I must add that he was largely responsible for its amalgamation with the English Folk Dance Society. With his encouragement and guidance the united societies were able to embark upon an ambitious programme to bring about a nationwide revival of interest in folk-music and folk-dancing. His interest in the competitive festival movement is also well known, and in particular, mention must be made of his work in connection with the Leith Hill Festival.

In 1934 Vaughan Williams became an honorary Life Fellow of the Worshipful Company of Musicians in succession to Sir Edward Elgar, and in the following year the very rare distinction of the Order of Merit was conferred upon him by King George V. In June 1938 the University of Hamburg presented him with the Hamburg Shakespeare Prize.

A retiring personality, Vaughan Williams has never sought honours or any of the other more glittering prizes coveted by ambitious men. Although he is often to be seen at musical events in London, he prefers above all the quiet of his country home at Dorking, where he takes a keen interest in local musical affairs.

He rarely fails to find inspiration in the hills, fields and woods of Britain, in fact it is part of his personal philosophy that "if the roots of your art are firmly planted in your own soil, and that soil has anything to give you, you may still gain the whole world and not lose your own soul." It is on this basis only that he is interested in nationalism in music.

Finally, a note of some of his other compositions not already mentioned in this sketch :

*Fantasia on Greensleeves.*

*Willow Wood* (Rossetti) for chorus.

*Old King Cole* : a ballet first played at Cambridge in 1923.

*Flos Campi* : A suite for viola, orchestra and voices (1925).

*Concerto Accademico* for violin and orchestra (1925).

*Fantasy on Sussex Folk-tunes* for cello and orchestra (1930).

*Benedicite* for chorus with soprano solo (1930).

*Magnificat* for chorus with contralto solo (1932).

Suite for Viola and orchestra (1934).

*The Poisoned Kiss*: a comic opera (libretto by Evelyn Sharp) first produced at Cambridge in 1936.

*Dona nobis pacem*: a motet for chorus, soprano and baritone soli (1936).

*Five Tudor Portraits*: chorus with contralto and baritone soli, performed at the Norwich Festival in 1936.

*Riders to the Sea*: an opera (libretto by Synge) first produced at Cambridge in 1937.

*Flourish for a Coronation* for chorus and orchestra, first sung by the Royal Philharmonic Society in April 1937.

*Te Deum Laudamus* for chorus and orchestra. First sung at the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937.

*Serenade to Music* for sixteen voices and orchestra, composed for Sir Henry Wood's Jubilee Concert at the Albert Hall on October 5th, 1938.



## PART II

### SOME CONTEMPORARIES OF OTHER NATIONS



BÉLA BARTÓK

# Béla Bartók



THIS great Hungarian composer was born at Nagyszentmiklós which is now within the borders of Yugoslavia, in 1881. His father was principal of an agricultural college, and his mother taught in an elementary school before her marriage. Both parents were enthusiastic amateur musicians, and gave every encouragement to their son when, soon after he started having piano lessons from his mother, he showed a persistent inclination to compose.

The boy's life was not an easy one: his father died when he was eight, and he was obliged to move about the country with his mother as she sought work as a teacher here and there. One compensation, however, was that Bartók acquired an intimate knowledge of his country's folk-music, and this was later to play a significant part in his musical development.

When he was but ten years old he gave his first piano recital, and included two or three little compositions of his own in the programme. The success of these convinced his mother that he possessed genius, and she struggled desperately to find work in or near one of the musical centres. This was not easy to do, but in 1893 she succeeded in getting an appointment at Pressburg (now Bratislava, Czechoslovakia), the most musical city in that part of the country, and sent her son to study composition and the piano with Laszlo Erkel. In this sympathetic environment Bartók met Dohnányi, who gave him valuable assistance with his compositions, took him to the opera house, and saw that he enjoyed all the benefits of the city's musical life.

It was Dohnányi who persuaded Bartók to go to the Budapest Musical Academy instead of the Vienna Conservatorium, where the majority of the more advanced and fashionable students were resorting. Thus Bartók's entire musical education was completed in his native land; a fact that is evident in so many of his works. At Budapest he studied the piano under Stephen Thomán (one of Liszt's most successful pupils) and composition with Hans Koessler, who also had Dohnányi and Kodály for his pupils.

The works of Liszt and Wagner were inspiring many of the younger composers at that time, but Bartók sought no guidance



from these masters, and turned instead to the national music of his native land. Soon after he left the Academy in 1903 he completed his *Kossuth Symphony*, which made a favourable impression upon the more advanced critics at its first performance. In less than twelve months Hans Richter was playing it in Manchester with the Hallé Orchestra; a fact worthy of record because it is fashionable now to disparage Richter and the type of conductor he represented; though it is true that Mancunian enthusiasm has always tended to over-rate his ability.

At that time, most people accepted without question the somewhat vulgar, sinuous gipsy music as the legitimate folk-music of Hungary; but Bartók and his friend Kodály bitterly resented this, and were determined to prove to the world that the real folk-music was something much purer, stronger and more homely. Bartók spent many hours in patient research and eventually succeeded in rediscovering hundreds of folk-songs that had been obscure for centuries or corrupted out of all recognition by the vulgarity of the gipsy bands. More than that, he discovered, not without some dismay, that much of the music he had regarded as purely Hungarian was of Slovak or Rumanian origin.

As a composer, Bartók developed rapidly, and when in 1907 he was given a professorship at the Royal Hungarian Musical Academy at Budapest he found himself among musicians of distinctly less advanced views than his own, and consequently many disputes arose during the five years he held office. The Philharmonic Society complained about what have been called the "barbaric colours" in his work, and it became almost impossible to secure satisfactory performances of his compositions. On account of this attitude he joined with Kodály and a few other sympathetic friends in founding the New Hungarian Musical Society, but like so many other musical organisations with neither financial backing nor adequate public support, it was a hopeless failure.

In 1912 Bartók retired from the Academy and devoted the whole of his time to research and composition. He visited Biskra to study Arab music, and would no doubt have done much in this direction had not the Great War upset all his plans.

It was 1917 before his own country generally acknowledged his genius. In May of that year his mime-ballet *The Woodcut Prince* was first performed in Budapest under Egisto Tango, who was sufficiently impressed by it to arrange for the production of Bartók's opera *Bluebeard's Castle* shortly afterwards. This had

been composed in 1911. With the performance of his Second String Quartet in 1918, he became recognised as the leading character in Hungarian music.

Although he was steeped in the folk-music of his native land, Bartók at this time began to be influenced to some extent by the works of Stravinsky and Schönberg, though fortunately this was balanced by his admiration for Bach. During the nineteen-twenties he rose rapidly in the esteem of musicians all over the world. When the International Society for Contemporary Music was founded in 1923 he was made an honorary life-member, and his Second Violin Sonata was performed at the Society's first festival.

His genius came to maturity with the writing of his First Piano Concerto in 1926, and further stages in his career were marked by such outstanding works as his First Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra (1928), *Cantata Profana* (for soli, chorus and orchestra) written in 1930, his Second Piano Concerto (1931) and the Fifth String Quartet (1934).

Bartók was unquestionably one of the "rebel" composers : he considered himself bound by no rules of harmony, and he had no particular method of composing. Intensely dynamic, his work was dominated by his own singularly vigorous and colourful personality. Its great originality makes it difficult for the average listener to understand. As Hugo Leichtentritt said :

"We must realize that it is his purpose to revivify the already exhausted, over-refined music of Europe with a transfusion of new blood from the peasant music of Hungary, which is still to be found in remote places. This amalgamative tendency has liberated him from the customary major and minor scales, and from harmony. In their places, he freely uses the mediaeval Church modes and a pentatonic scale system, elements which predominate in the old Magyar music. Bartók is only 'atonal' to the superficial ear. His mind is logical and severe, intent on order and system, and the definite logic and tonality of his harmony are also obvious once its basis is clearly understood."

Another outstanding feature of Bartók's music is the great strength and diversity of its rhythm. His endless changes of time-signature tend to confuse performer and audience alike, but the composer's intentions become clear when one stands back, as it were, and views the canvas as a whole.

In writing his orchestral music, Bartók *thought* in the sounds

of the instruments he intended to employ. He never wrote out his ideas for the piano and then proceeded to orchestrate them, as many composers seem bound to do. The sound of every instrument was heard mentally in each phrase as it was conceived, and it was sketched straight on to the manuscript paper, frequently without even a trial upon the piano. This unquestionably accounts for the refreshing sweeps of unconstrained colour in his work that appeal even to those of us who are not particularly inspired by music of this class. One of the worst faults of many minor British composers of today is that they seem to be unable to free themselves from the trammels of the keyboard when writing for voices, strings or even wind instruments: they have a "keyboard-complex," and the pity of it is that they are blissfully unaware of their failing. Dozens of British choral works written during the past twenty or thirty years reveal that their composers have conceived them while seated at the piano, and after trying phrases over on the keyboard, have set them down on paper with no more thought for the voices than the limits of their range. Some of the worst offenders are certain cathedral organists (often having somehow acquired degrees of doctor of music) who have trained choirs daily at their side. Without discrediting the indispensable piano in any way, one cannot help feeling that these gentlemen would become far better musicians if they were deprived of their keyboard's apron strings for a while.

During the last ten years we have seen a mellowing of the aggressive element in Bartók's manner, and his later works, the Rhapsody for clarinet, violin and piano, the *Mikrokosmos* piano pieces, and his brilliant *Music for Two Pianos and Percussion* all have a charm of riper thought and feeling.

Since October 1940 he lived in New York, where a serious illness compelled him to suspend his activities for some months. Nevertheless, throughout the war years his influence in America was highly significant. He lectured as a professor of Columbia University and gave several piano recitals. His Violin Concerto, completed in 1938 and performed in Amsterdam and other cities of the Netherlands just before the invasion of Poland, was given many magnificent performances in America before it was first played in England by Yehudi Menuhin and the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult on September 20th 1944.

Describing this work, Henry Cowell says:<sup>1</sup> "Each of its three movements is beautifully sustained, and the thematic

<sup>1</sup> *Tempo*: September, 1944.

relationship between the first and last movements—the first of the last movement is a hurry-up version of the first theme of the first movement—gives a feeling of fine breadth and inherent unity. The themes are definitely of the composed variety, not folk themes, but the vast amount of embroidery and passage work with which they are decorated is definitely that of the good old Hungarian violin tradition, treated with taste and distinction. The decoration is so essential a part of the thematic development that it cannot be claimed to be anything but an integral part of the whole. Since this decoration is often very brilliant, rapid and difficult, it affords the player an opportunity to show technical skill in essential passages, without requiring extraneous nonsense just for that purpose. In slower sections the passage-work is in itself as expressive as the more sustained portions of the melodies which are joined by the passages. The orchestra, with a comparatively slight instrumentation, is sympathetic and simple. It uses a clear rhythmical counterpoint and canonic thematic entrances, with much lacy passage-work of its own. The whole concerto gives an impression of melodic delicacy, fervour of rhythm, and strongly contrasted harmonies . . . which give kaleidoscopic colour to a work whose fundamental elements are contrapuntal melody and rhythm.”

Bartók's last major work was the large-scale Concerto for orchestra written in 1943 at the request of the Koussevitzky Foundation and first performed in Boston in the late autumn of the following year.

Bartók was a recluse, shy and inclined to be self-effacing. He was rarely seen at the social functions of even his greatest friends, and when addressed spoke so quietly that one found it difficult to reconcile the man with the spirit portrayed in his works.

On September 27th, 1945, just as this book was going to press, we received the news of his death in New York

# Ernest Bloch



THE composition of modern music in the Hebrew idiom has occupied many years in the creative life of Ernest Bloch. "It is the Jewish soul that interests me; the complex, glowing, agitated soul that I feel vibrating throughout the Bible . . . the freshness and naïveté of the Patriarchs; the violence of the Prophetic Books; the Jews' savage love of justice; the despair of Ecclesiastes; the sorrow and immensity of the Book of Job; the sensuality of the Song of Songs . . . It is all this that I endeavour to hear in myself and to transcribe in my music: the venerable emotion of the race that slumbers way down in our soul."<sup>1</sup>

He was born on July 24th 1880 at Geneva, of Swiss-Jewish parents. His father, a clockmaker, loved to sing the ancient Hebrew liturgical melodies, and they made such a profound impression upon the boy that even when he was quite small he felt conscious of a strange urge to dilate and adorn them in an effort to express to others the emotions that seemed to be surging within him. He was still a child when he made a solemn vow to himself that he would devote the whole of his life to the composition of music, and it was with almost a priestly veneration for the art that he became a pupil of L. Rey for the violin and of Jacques Dalcroze for composition. At the age of fifteen he completed an "Oriental" symphony and a string quartet.

When he was sixteen he left home to study at the Brussels Conservatoire for a while under Eugen Ysaÿe and François Rasse, and then proceeded to the Frankfurt Conservatoire for a year with Iwan Knorr, followed by a twelve-months' course with Ludwig Thuille at Munich, where he wrote his Symphony in C-sharp-minor.

Then he studied in Paris, where his four songs *Historiettes au Crépuscule* were published in 1903. But although he showed great ability and promise as a student, he found it almost impossible to earn a livelihood at music during the next few years, and consequently he was obliged to work for a while as a traveller in his father's clockmaking business. Working in his spare time, he composed many excellent works, and even commenced his opera

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Music*, Nov.-Dec., 1927.

*Macbeth* (libretto by Edmund Fleg, based on Shakespeare) which, however, was not finished until 1909, when with little confidence, he sent it to the directors of the Opéra Comique at Paris for consideration. Their acceptance of this work was a great encouragement, and it came at a time when he had established for himself something of a reputation as a conductor as well. For some months he had been directing the orchestral concerts at Lausanne and Neuchâtel.

The opera was produced on November 30th 1910, but the Parisians were evidently in no mood for intense emotions portrayed by harsh dissonances, and despite its many good features, the work was sharply criticized and consequently withdrawn. Arthur Pougin, writing in *Le Ménestrel* described the opera as "an indecipherable rebus, rhythmically as well as tonally; and I ask myself how the singers and orchestra found their way through it. The rhythm is not only capricious but utterly incoherent . . . It is noise for the sake of noise, and the abuse of the trumpets would break the sturdiest ear-drums,"

In 1915 Bloch became the professor of composition at the Geneva Conservatoire, and while he was there he met Alexander Barjansky, the 'cellist, who suggested that he should write a 'cello sonata or concerto. Bloch thereupon wrote his *Schelomo* (the Hebrew name for Solomon), a rhapsody for 'cello and orchestra inspired by the book of Ecclesiastes, by which he had been profoundly moved, all the more because of the horrors of the Great War. This is now one of his most popular works, though the average listener would probably find it rather a gloomy composition.

In 1916 he went to America, but for several years remained an obscure composer, and was known more for his occasional appearances as a conductor. He settled in New York, and in time acquired an additional reputation as a teacher of composition. In 1920 he was appointed director of the Cleveland Institute of Music, and six years later went to California as principal of the San Francisco Conservatory.

By this time Bloch had several important works to his credit, including the *Israel* symphony and settings of certain psalms. Moreover, he had won various prizes, including the Coolidge Prize for his Suite for Viola. He had already begun to use quarter-tones to increase the emotional intensity of some of his works, as for instance in his Piano Quintet (1923), which was first performed at the inaugural concert of the League of Composers in New York

on November 11th of that year. To the ordinary listener, his greatest achievement was perhaps his "epic rhapsody" *America*, which he wrote as a tribute to the land of his adoption and won an award of five thousand dollars from *Musical America*. Bloch generally refers to it as a symphony and declares that it was written as an expression of his love for America "in reverence for its past and in faith in its future." It is dedicated to the memory of Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman "whose vision has upheld its inspiration." This highly interesting work gives a musical picture of American history from 1620 to 1926, and seems to be based on everything from folk-song and hymn tunes to Indian war songs and jazz. It was first performed by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra on December 20th 1928.

He then proceeded to write a similar tribute to his native land: *Helvetia* "a symphonic fresco" but this is rather less successful.

In 1930 Bloch received a commission from Gerald Warburg of New York to write a musical setting of a Jewish service. He worked on this for something like two years during a prolonged return visit to his native country, Italy and France. *Avodath Hakodesh* ("Sacred Service") for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra was based on a text of which Bloch himself says "though intensely Jewish in roots, the message seems to me above all a gift of Israel to the whole of mankind. It symbolized for me far more than a Jewish Service, . . . in its great simplicity and variety it embodies a philosophy acceptable to all men."

The Sacred Service was first heard in Turin, and here perhaps, I should quote a little from a manifesto by the composer published in *Musica Hebraica*:<sup>1</sup> "In my work termed 'Jewish'—my Psalms, *Schelomo*, *Israel*, *Three Jewish Poems*, *Baal Shem*, pieces for the 'cello, The Sacred Service, *The Voice in the Wilderness*—I have not approached the problem from without . . . by employing melodies more or less authentic . . . or 'Oriental' formulae, rhythms, or intervals more or less sacred. No! I have but listened to an inner voice, deep, secret, insistent, ardent, an instinct much more than cold and dry reason, a voice which seemed to come from far beyond myself, far beyond my parents . . . a voice which surged up in me on reading certain passages in the Bible, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Psalms, the Prophets . . .

"This entire Jewish heritage moved me deeply, it was reborn in my music. To what extent it is Jewish, to what extent it is just

<sup>1</sup> Jerusalem: 1938.

Ernest Bloch, of that I know nothing. The future alone will decide."

Having been made an honorary member of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Bloch spent much of his time in Italy, where he received more sympathy than in any other European country, until in 1938 the anti-semitic feeling whipped up by the Fascists grew so strong that towards the end of that year he was obliged to return to the United States, where he has stayed ever since. He visited London *en route*, and spent some time with many of his friends in this country who had formed the Ernest Bloch Society in 1937 to spread the knowledge and appreciation of his music. This organization received the support of many eminent composers and conductors.

Bloch's later works include a symphonic suite *Evocations* (1937), a Concerto for violin and orchestra (1938), one or two piano works, and an Orchestral Suite in three movements: Overture, Passacaglia and Finale, which he has just completed (1944).

Ernest Bloch is a short, thick-set man with sharp piercing eyes, and is inclined to be nervous. His extreme candour, chiefly in musical matters, is relieved by a wonderful sense of humour, but he has not a very high opinion of many of the modern composers enjoying ephemeral popularity at the moment. His own work is so profound, so sincere, that he has little patience with sophisticated "clever" music. He particularly detests the craze for "novelty" in music, and believes that the frenzy in which some composers seek "originality" is appropriately portrayed in some of the absurdities they expect us to listen to to-day. This freakish, superficially brilliant music will not last for more than a few years at the most. On the other hand, Bloch has a deep reverence for all the work of the old masters.

During the past few years he has been living quite simply at a quiet spot at Portland, Oregon, travelling south during the summer months for his lectures at the University of California at Berkeley. His academic duties take up a good deal of his time, but he intends to continue composing, particularly during the winter months.



# Alfredo Casella



IT is said that Alfredo Casella is a direct descendant of Pietro Casella the thirteenth-century composer of madrigals mentioned by Dante in his *Purgatorio*. This is quite probably true, but almost impossible to prove, though there is no doubt that he comes of a very old family of Italian musicians.

He was born on July 25th 1883, son of a professor at the Liceo Musicale at Turin. His mother was a brilliant pianist, and began to teach him to play the piano almost as soon as he could walk. He could play the whole of Bach's Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues perfectly when he was only nine, and his interest in opera was aroused when at the age of eleven he was taken to see *Cavalleria Rusticana*, though he was far more impressed by *Götterdämmerung* when he heard it conducted by Toscanini some twelve months later.

Throughout his boyhood his interest was divided between music and science: he was so fascinated by chemistry and electricity that his musical genius might never have developed if Giuseppe Martucci had not advised him to go to the Paris Conservatoire. Once he was surrounded by students who were bubbling over with musical enthusiasm his course for the future was set. He studied composition under Xavier Leroux and Gabriel Fauré and the piano with Louis Diémer. His progress was spectacular: in the summer of 1906 he completed his First Symphony (in B-minor) which he dedicated to Xavier Leroux, and was soon in demand as a solo pianist and conductor.

A memorable occasion during the early part of his career was the concert of his own works that he conducted at the Salle Gaveau in Paris. The principal items were his Suite in C-major, written in 1909, and his rhapsody *Italia*, completed a few months previously, based on Sicilian and Neapolitan songs, a work that has now become popular all over the world. It is in two parts: the first is said to represent industrial scenes in the Sicilian sulphur mines, the second is a gay, colourful picture of merry-making at Naples. The whole work is modern without being cacophonous, full of vitality and good contrasts, and employs some excellent

themes, one of which is peculiarly Oriental, and another is Denza's *Funiculi Funicula*. It was first heard in this country at the Queen's Hall on November 20th, 1920, and was very well received.

Casella next became interested in Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, and was moved to write a "choreographic comedy" in two acts called *Il Convento Veneziano*. I have no note of its first performance as a ballet, but it was played as a suite at an orchestral concert in Paris in the spring of 1914.

Alfredo Casella left Paris in 1913 and returned to Italy as a champion of modern music: he was then known chiefly as a conductor with a passion for introducing the music of his contemporaries. His position as a composer was less certain, for although he had completed his Second Symphony, few were interested in it, and he did not succeed in getting it published.

Just at that time he changed his style of composition and introduced what is commonly called harmonic or chord counterpoint. The first work of his "second style," as he calls it, was *Notte di Maggio*, a polytonal poem for soprano and orchestra inspired by the well-known lyric by Carducci. The final chord of this, in which the major and minor come together without reciprocal predominance aroused a great deal of controversy among the critics.

The Great War made a profound impression upon Casella. He was in Paris again when it started and for a while taught as a professor at the Conservatoire. The destruction and horror, the plight of refugees, and other miseries were all reflected in his *Pagine di Guerra* (1916), and in the symphonic tribute to the soldiers of the Allied armies *Elegia Eroica* which he wrote in the same year. The latter was first performed at the Augusteo, Rome, under Rhené-Baton in January 1917, but its modernism provoked a riotous demonstration by the audience, and then the newspapers all took up the attack, so Casella was still far from being Italy's favourite composer. Undeterred, he founded the Società Nazionale di Musica to show his critics that he meant to stand by the cause of modern music. This society was renamed La Corporazione delle Nuove Musiche when in 1923 it was incorporated into the International Society for Contemporary Music as the Italian branch of it.

After the Great War, Casella visited America for the first time, appearing with the Philadelphia Orchestra as a conductor, and frequently as a solo pianist. At about that time he again revised his style of composition, abandoning his tendency towards romantic

chromaticism. The change was established in the Concerto for String Quartet which he wrote in the spring of 1924. He says himself that "This Concerto belongs to my third style. I consider it to be the first work in which I truly achieved what for fifteen years had been the goal of all my studies: a modern Italian style."

Then came another "choreographic comedy," *La Giara*, which with his Partita for piano and orchestra was first performed by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra in October 1925 under Willem Mengelberg. Another notable work is his *Concerto Romano* for organ, three trumpets, three trombones, timpani and strings, a festival piece first heard in New York in 1927.

We must not overlook the important branch of his work that has been connected with the trio he formed with Poltronieri the violinist and Bonnucci the cellist. They have travelled all over Europe and America giving performances of chamber music in the greater musical centres.

When he reached the age of forty-seven, Casella wrote his autobiography, but for some time was unable to think of a suitably original title for it. Eventually he chose "21+26"—the sum of his years. Another of his literary works is the excellent little book *Il Pianoforte*, published by Tuminelli of Milan in 1937. In discussing the aesthetics of the instrument, he says: "The chief peculiarity of the piano, by which it differs from all other instruments, is its complete independence of vocality. All bow and wind instruments model themselves more or less closely on the human voice, particularly in the *cantabile*. But not the piano, which has a *cantabile* of its own, in which its inability to sustain tone is taken into account. This *cantabile* is utterly different from that of the voice, and is also utterly unreal. The effect created by the use of the pedals contributes to the capacity of the instrument for evoking unreality, mystery and magic—a capacity greater than that of the orchestra, even in the hands of such masterly orchestrators as Ravel or Berg."

Among Casella's later compositions we find an oratorio about the Ethiopian war *Il Deserto Tentato*, first performed in Florence in May 1937, a Concerto for orchestra (1937) and *Sonata a tre* for piano, violin and 'cello (1938).

# Aaron Copland



THE works of Aaron Copland seem to increase in importance in America very nearly as rapidly as they increase in number, and although we appear to be a little slow in recognizing him in this country, there is no doubt that we shall hear much more about him in the future, for he is a prolific young composer whose output is of a quality that cannot be overlooked.

He was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 14th 1900 of Russian-Jewish parents whose original name was Kaplan, but owing to the carelessness of an immigration official when they arrived at Ellis Island in 1876, it was misspelt "Copland," and has remained so ever since.

Aaron Copland was educated at Brooklyn High School, and received his first music lessons from his sister. When he was seventeen he began studying composition with Rubin Goldmark, and went to Victor Wittgenstein and Clarence Adler to improve his piano technique. His progress was so remarkable that a career in music seemed the obvious course for him to take, so he continued studying in America until he was twenty-one, and then went to Paris to work for three years with Nadia Boulanger. When he returned to New York in 1924 the award of the Guggenheim Fellowship permitted a further two years to be devoted to study, and during that period he wrote a number of works that proclaimed him to be one of the composers of the future. The first of importance was *Grohg*, a ballet in one act, from which his *Cortège Macabre* was afterwards published as a separate work. Then followed his Symphony for organ and orchestra which was first performed in New York in January 1925 under the direction of Walter Damrosch with Nadia Boulanger as the soloist.

Mention must here be made of his *Music for the Theatre*, for chamber orchestra and piano, which is a light, invigorating suite in five movements: Prologue, Dance (in which jazz technique is employed), Interlude, Burlesque, and Epilogue. It was first heard at a concert given by the League of Composers in New York under Serge Koussevitzky, to whom it is dedicated. Another important work completed at about this time is his Concerto for

Piano and Orchestra, which was first performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky in January 1927. It is in two linked movements, the second of which uses jazz rhythms.

His desire that other young composers, as well as himself, should be given a fair hearing induced him to join Roger Sessions in the running of a series of concerts devoted to the work of young and unrecognized American composers. These "Copland-Sessions" concerts, as they became known, were continued for over three years and were of the greatest service to American music. It was Copland, too, who inaugurated the American Festivals of Contemporary Music at Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, New York.

In 1929 the R.C.A. Victor Company offered a prize of twenty-five thousand dollars for a symphonic work, and Copland decided to write a *Symphonic Ode* for the purpose. As the closing date drew near, however, he realized that it would be impossible to complete the ode in time, so he extracted three dances from his ballet *Grohg* and submitted them as a *Dance Symphony*. The judges experienced the greatest difficulty in coming to a decision, and eventually divided the prize, awarding five thousand dollars to Copland, the same sum each to Louis Gruenberg and Ernest Bloch, and ten thousand dollars to Robert Russell Bennett for two entries. Copland's *Dance Symphony* was first played by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Stokowski in April 1931, but was not heard in New York until the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra performed it under Rodzinski in 1937.

Copland resumed work on the *Symphonic Ode* and completed it just in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1931. It was performed by that orchestra on the following February 19th under the direction of Koussevitzky.

Since 1935 Copland has held the position of Lecturer in Music at the New School for Social Research, New York, and also a similar appointment at Harvard University. In addition he has lectured extensively on modern music at the Berkshire Music Centre, Lenox, Mass.

His music reflects a remarkably keen intellect, but it also reveals a restlessness that suggests he is anything but settled in his mind concerning the purpose of his work and the style he will ultimately adopt. He has tried several idioms and produced a number of very clever works, but one gets the impression that he is not entirely satisfied with his own efforts. He has yet to reach

his maturity, but when he does, we shall probably get a masterpiece of the first order.

In 1938 Lincoln Kirstein commissioned Copland to write something for his Ballet Caravan. The result was *Billy the Kid*, a remarkable ballet in one act about the Western outlaw. When it was first performed by the NBC Orchestra under Hans Wilhelm Steinberg it was given a tremendous ovation, and it became a great favourite in America almost overnight. No less than eight performances of it as an orchestral suite were given by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and *Modern Music* declared :

"The warmth and poetry of this music, the perfect manipulation of the folk-material, make it American in the way that *Petrouchka* is Russian. It is tender, sardonic, gay, scored in colours that belong to the theatre as do spotlights, and permeated with an elusive nostalgia."

Its first performance in London was not very satisfactory, and the audience remained apparently unmoved, but shortly afterwards, Hugo Weisgall, an American composer serving in England, was engaged to give another performance of it with the London Symphony Orchestra, and the work was very well received.

Copland's *Outdoor Overture*, a "light-weight, lively work" was written in 1939, but air-raids were in progress when it was brought to England, and while it was being printed in this country, the plant was hit by an incendiary bomb, and its *première* over here was consequently delayed for some time. It has now been played by the London Symphony Orchestra under Hugo Weisgall at the Adelphi Theatre, and also by the Scottish Orchestra in Glasgow and the BBC Northern Orchestra under Louis Cohen.

His *Lincoln Portrait*, written in 1942, was first heard in Britain at a Promenade concert in 1943, when Lieut. Burgess Meredith of the American Army took the part of orator. The *Daily Telegraph* commented enthusiastically on the concert, and spoke of the "deepest impression being made by Copland's *Portrait*, in which cunningly written music enhanced the effect of moving passages from Lincoln's speeches." This work was commissioned by Andre Kostelanetz, the conductor, who asked for "a musical portrait of a great American." It has received nationwide praise in America, in fact the *New York Times* declared : "This is the American composer's best work. Mr. Copland has produced a warm, earthy, sensitive, evocative score."

Copland has also written sonatas for both piano and violin.

The piano sonata, begun in 1939, was not completed until two years later, during a tour of Latin-American countries which he was invited to make for the purpose of promoting closer musical ties with the United States. Thus it so happened that the composer gave the first performance in Buenos Aires in October 1941. The Violin Sonata, a still more recent work, was first heard in New York on January 17th 1944, when Ruth Posselt played the solo part with the composer at the piano. Virgil Thompson said in the *New York Herald Tribune* that the work was "full of rhythmic life and melodic ingenuity . . . It has a quality at once of calm elevation and of buoyancy that is characteristic of Copland and irresistibly touching. Its feeling is one of intense inner gaiety."

Aaron Copland spent the summer of 1944 at Tepoztlan, an Aztec village sixty miles from Mexico City, and there began work on a new symphony commissioned by the Foundation created by Serge Koussevitzky as a memorial to his wife, Madame Natalie Koussevitzky. This work will no doubt be complete by the time this book is published. Of his experiences in Tepoztlan, Copland writes: "Everything is very primitive, except my house, which boasts a bathroom. There is a local post-office in the grocery store, but no 'phone and no telegraph office. The Indians here simply don't have use for such items. There is no electricity . . . There are no radios . . . no paved streets, no traffic. What the town has is wonderful mountains all about, and a great peace."

In his book *What to Listen for in Music* (MacGraw-Hill Publishing Company; 1939) Copland tells us that he only composes when he feels in the mood for so doing, and that the great complexity of modern harmony makes it necessary for most composers of to-day to use a piano when trying to set their thoughts down on paper. I mention this because several other composers in this book have also expressed their opinions on this subject.

Copland is interested in literature and art, but in these, as in music, he is a relentless modernist. He believes that there is little to be gained from looking backward: it is our job to develop our art in sympathy with the age in which we are living.

# Manuel De Falla



WE now come to modern Spain, taking the utmost care, of course, to avoid the bullets and knives of political extremists, and meet this country's greatest contemporary composer : Manuel De Falla. He was born at Cadiz on November 23rd 1876. His mother, of Catalan origin, was a very accomplished pianist, and was personally responsible for the initiation of her son into the rudiments of music. He took to the art with such alacrity that when he was only eleven he shared with his mother the playing of Haydn's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* (arranged for four hands) in a church performance.

He was not attracted to the piano sufficiently to want to specialize as a pianist. Instead, his inclinations seemed to be more in the direction of chamber music, and when he began to take lessons from two local musicians, Otero and Broca, he found great pleasure in listening to any little group of instrumentalists who happened to assemble for the purpose of music-making.

Music was in a deplorable condition in Spain when Falla was a boy, and there were not many opportunities to hear good music performed by competent professionals. When he was seventeen however, he went to a series of symphony concerts and heard works of Grieg and Beethoven that thrilled him beyond anything he had ever known, and it was then that he set his heart upon becoming a composer. He had by that time received piano lessons from José Trago of Madrid, and had become intoxicated by the music of Wagner. Moreover, he had heard wonderful stories of the musical life of Paris and longed to go there as a student, but his parents were quite unable to find the money, so he tried to make a start as a composer by working on his own.

In those days the average Spanish audience had ears for only one type of musical entertainment : the zarzuela, a sort of comic opera in which songs and spoken dialogue are interspersed. Most of the small amount of talent available in Spain at that time was being wasted upon this type of production. Falla therefore tried to find favour, and a little money, by writing a work of this nature. His first effort *Los Amores de la Inés* was produced in 1902, but



was a lamentable failure. Then he wrote a second, *La Casa de tócame Roque*, which favourably impressed a well-known producer, but because of the failure of its predecessor, was never staged.

Falla might easily have given up in despair, but he happened to meet Felipe Pedrell, who had been striving for years to stir up Spanish interest in more worthy forms of music. Pedrell could see in Manuel De Falla a wealth of talent running to waste, and immediately arranged for the young man to study with him in Madrid. Under this inspired teacher he learnt to appreciate the value of Spanish folksong, and caught some of the older man's burning desire to revive the musical culture of his native land.

Falla's first great opportunity came when in 1904 the Academy of Fine Arts at Madrid announced a competition for composers of lyrical drama. Falla set to work without delay on a two-act opera which he called *La Vida Breve*, and which in due course won the prize. At about the same time he competed as a pianist for the "Ortiz y Cusso" award, and was again successful.

For the next couple of years he taught music in Madrid, and was able to save enough to fulfil his long-suppressed desire to see Paris in 1907. He went for a week's holiday, chiefly to see the city, hear some good music and meet some of the inspired musicians who resorted there. He stayed there for seven years! With little or no money he strove to support himself, and by enduring many hardships he gradually found his way into the musical circles of which he had been dreaming for years. Recognizing the impassioned sincerity of the young composer, Ravel, Debussy and Paul Dukas all began to take an interest in him and gave him valuable assistance. The only one who seems to have influenced his style perceptibly, however, was Maurice Ravel.

Manuel De Falla was still in Paris when in 1909 he published his *Quatre pièces espagnoles pour le piano* which Ricardo Viñes played almost immediately at a concert given by the Société Nationale de Musique, and which Falla brought to London when he made his first appearance in this country in 1911. His *Trois Mélodies* followed shortly afterwards.

Then he started upon his *Noches en los Jardines de España* (Nights in the Gardens of Spain), but this, which many people consider to be his finest work, was not completed until 1915. As he became better known, the impresarios began to pay more attention to his lyric drama *La Vida Breve*, and it was produced at the Municipal Casino at Nice in the spring of 1913 with such success that before the end of the year it was being staged at the

Opéra Comique in Paris. He was then urged to adopt French nationality by those who thought it would help to make him more popular, but he refused.

When the war clouds gathered in 1914 he returned to Madrid and in November of that year was able to go to the Teatro de la Zarzuela to see his *La Vida Breve* in production. In the following April his ballet-pantomime *El Amor Brujo* (Wedded by Witchcraft), in which he made extensive use of Andalusian folk-songs, was staged at the Teatro Lara. The popular *Ritual Fire Dance* was one of the several pieces taken from this work and arranged for the piano.

The next notable event was the first performance of *Noches en los Jardines de España* in Madrid in 1916. This work, too, has a strong Andalusian flavour, which a great many people erroneously believe to be more Spanish than the Castilian idiom of his later compositions. Then it was not long before his pantomimic farce *El Corregidor y la Molinera*, adapted from Alarcon's story *The Three-cornered Hat* was produced at the Teatro de Eslava with Joaquin Turina conducting. This *opus* was later revised as a ballet and performed under the author's title at the Alhambra, London, in 1921 by Diaghilev's Russian Ballet. It was most pleasing to the audience, all the more, perhaps, because Diaghilev brought over some very fascinating Spanish dancers who seemed to radiate the infectious spirit of sunniness that one associates with those who dwell in less rigorous climates than our own. The composer was present and took an enthusiastic call.

In 1922 Falla moved to Granada, where he organized a festival of "cante hondo," the popular traditional song of Spain; and wrote such works as the Harpsichord Concerto and the music for his marionette show *El Retablo de Maese Pedro* (Master Peter's Puppet Show). The latter, which was first performed at Seville in the spring of 1923, is based on an episode from the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes; an extremely witty and amusing little score. Its *première* in England was at the Victoria Rooms, Clifton (Bristol), in 1924 under Dr. Malcolm Sargent, with Arthur Cranmer as Don Quixote. It was performed in New York in 1925, the year in which Falla was made an honorary member of the Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome.

The Harpsichord Concerto was first heard at Barcelona in the following year with Wanda Landowska, for whom it was written, as the soloist. It was brought to London in June 1927, when the composer himself played the harpsichord with rather less

success than Landowska could have done. It is difficult to detect anything strikingly Spanish in this work, except in the slow movement which to my mind has a delicious atmosphere of warmth and Seville oranges.

Falla's later works include *Homenajes* (1. Pour le Tombeau de Debussy, 2. Pour le Tombeau de Dukas, 3. Fanfare Pour Arbós, 4. Pedrelliana), and his *Balada de Mallorca*, after Chopin, for mixed chorus. His *magnum opus*, *La Atlantida*, a huge oratorio based on the epic by Jacinto Verdaguer, was commenced in 1928 and he was still working on it ten years later. Whether this has been completed or not I don't know, but as far as I am aware, it has never been performed.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, Falla was at his home in Granada, and owing to ill-health, was able to remain there unmolested, although he openly sided with the insurgents. In May 1938 he was appointed President of the Instituto de España founded by General Franco, but was not well enough to attend the inaugural ceremonies at Burgos.

He continues to live in Granada, and I am told that his villa, where he spends his days almost in monastic seclusion, occupies one of the most lovely and romantic spots in the country. It is quite close to both the Alhambra and the Generalife Gardens, which inspired his *Noches en los Jardines*. From his study window he can see the snow-capped Sierra Nevadas.

Manuel De Falla is particularly interested in the music of Wagner, but his admiration is tempered with shrewd criticism. Writing in *Cruz y Raya* some years ago he said that no other composer's work showed such a striking mixture of wisdom and error. "Nobody has attempted to judge his works dispassionately" he declares, "Some have ignored his highest qualities; others have tried to show his worst defects as virtues. To-day we should be able to see him clearly. His glorious music lives because of its intrinsic merits and power, but it is devoid of the prophetic significance which he tried to impart to it . . . He thought he was sowing the seeds of the dramatic music of the future. Nowadays we dismiss the dramatic content of his works because we find it too similar to that of the very type of opera against which he thought he was reacting. His desire to achieve a lofty ideal inspired him only as long as it did not conflict with his egotism. Hence the mixture of strength and weakness in both his life and works."

Discussing the art of Manuel De Falla in a book published

some years ago,<sup>1</sup> Roland-Manuel says: "His aesthetics seem to verge upon asceticism, but are akin to mysticism. He rose to mastery by following a path that closely resembles the 'way to perfection' of the Castilian mystics. He is instinctively with their intellectual realism, their spiritual alacrity; like them he is impervious to the call of the age, intent on simplification, pre-occupied solely with the essential, eager for action—action which breaks away from contemplation in the same way as a ripe fruit drops from the tree."

<sup>1</sup> *Manuel De Falla*: Editions *Cahiers d'Art*, Paris.

# Reingold Gliere



**E**ARLY in January 1945 musical circles all over Russia celebrated the seventieth birthday of Reingold Gliere, Chairman of the Union of Soviet Composers, and one of the most influential teachers of modern times. Telegrams from all over the world, from such conductors as Stokowski and such artists as Heifetz, greeted the "Father of Soviet Composers," as he is generally known, for his great reputation as a teacher is apt to overshadow his genius as a composer.

Born in Kiev in 1875, he was the son of a maker of wind instruments and became an accomplished violinist while he was still a child. His father's house was a favourite rendezvous for musicians, and the boy was never without a small but critical audience when he wished to play some of his earliest efforts at composition. When he reached the age of sixteen it was quite obvious that he would make a success of a musical career, so he went to the Kiev School of Music for three years and then entered the Moscow Conservatoire to study the violin with Sokolovsky and Grgimali, harmony with Arensky and Konius, counterpoint with Taneiev, and composition under Ippolitov-Ivanov.

Gliere's earliest works were chiefly chamber music—among them we find a sextet dedicated to Taneiev—and were published under the editorship of Belyaev. These, with his First Symphony (which was later revised) and the early Romanzas reveal clearly his ties with the great traditions of Russian musical culture; they are all colourful works, emotional and profound, enriched with pleasing melodies and unconstrained rhythms.

He graduated with a one-act opera *Earth and Heaven* (after Byron), and accepted a teaching post at the Gnessin School of Music in Moscow, but was able to find time to continue creative work and it was not long before he produced his Second Symphony, which he dedicated to Koussevitzky, as well as various other orchestral works.

In 1907 he went to Berlin for a year to study conducting with Oscar Fried, and from that time became increasingly popular as a conductor of symphonic works.

His Third Symphony, *Ilya Muromets*, was dedicated to Glazounov and first published in 1911. This monumental work earned him world-wide renown; in America it became one of the favourite items in the extensive repertoire of Leopold Stokowski.

From 1913 to 1920 he was the Director of the Kiev Conservatoire, then he was inspired by the Nationalities Policy of the Soviet Government to make a prolonged study of the folklore and folkmusic of Azerbaijan, so that he could revive the national music of that particular republic. He moved to Baku, its capital, and from there visited a large number of the towns and villages of this state which lies on the shores of the Caspian Sea and boasts of a national art as old as that of the Far East. Deciding to write an Azerbaijanian opera, he chose the sixteenth-century Azerbaijanian fable which told of the beautiful Shah-Senen and of her lover Ashug Kerib. Difficulties arose, however, when he tried to separate the Azerbaijanian "Mougams" (folk-tunes) from the Iranian melodies, and eventually he was obliged to use some tunes which might possibly have had Iranian origins. The opera, *Shah Senen*, was completed in 1925; the first Soviet grand opera to be heard in the theatres of the republic. It was not performed in Moscow until 1938, when it was the *pièce de résistance* at the great Festival of Azerbaijanian Art.

A similar period of research in Uzbekistan produced the musical drama *Gulsara*, and some years later the opera *Leili and Medjnun*. For the choreographic poem *Zaporozhtsy*, he drew upon the national music of the Ukraine; and other works of considerable importance are his ballet *Red Poppy*, the symphonic overture *Friendship of Peoples* (written for the fifth anniversary of the Stalin Constitution), the fine opera *Rachel* (based on Guy de Maupassant's story *Mademoiselle Fifi* and depicting the French people's hatred of the German invaders in the Franco-Prussian War), and the Triumphant Overture *Victory*, written in 1944 and based on Russian, English and American folksongs.

Glierie has for years enjoyed the high esteem of his fellow countrymen. He holds many honours, including the title "People's Artist of the Soviet Union," the Order of the Red Banner, the Soviet Order of Merit, and so forth. The degree of Doctor of Sciences (Research in Art) was conferred upon him some years ago. He is a man of great intellect and personal charm, and is an important social figure in the greater cities of the Soviet Union.

Although many of his compositions are based upon the

national music of various republics of the Soviet Union, they all bear the stamp of his own particular style of craftsmanship, and their popularity in Russia is probably due to his great understanding of the people's taste in music. His work seems to lack originality when compared with some of the more progressive Soviet composers, but will for years hold the affection of the Russian people.

When the musical historians of the future review the twentieth century, it will probably be found that Gliere's greatest service to his art was in his work as a teacher of composition. He has always possessed a remarkable power of drawing out the real genius in his pupils and of inspiring them with all the best traditions of Russian music. Such brilliant composers as Prokofiev, Khachaturian and Miaskovsky all studied with him.

# Roy Harris



**A**MONG the works of Roy Harris we could find at least half-a-dozen compositions that could be performed as examples of modern American music at its best. This selection would also give the listener some idea of the mentality of an unusually interesting character.

No silver spoon, no cultured friends, and no propitious environment favoured him as a boy. He was born in a rough log cabin at Oklahoma, Lincoln County, on February 12th 1898—Abraham Lincoln's birthday. His parents were poor pioneer farmers of Scottish-Irish extraction who toiled from morning till night to wrest the necessities of life from the rugged earth. When he was five years old, persistent attacks of malaria compelled his parents to move to California, where they took a farm in the Gabriel Valley.

Although he was obliged to help his father, Roy Harris was in later years able to attend a local high-school, and it was then that he began to take an interest in music. He was given desultory lessons on the clarinet, piano and organ, but his musical education was decidedly scanty until he became a young man. When he left school, he could see prospects of little else but a life of hard manual work, so he devoted himself to farming and worked with such energy and determination that he succeeded in getting a holding of his own by the time he was eighteen. This gave him a sense of security and the delight of having a little leisure now and then, so he began to study music and philosophy. He bought books and discovered that a little library of his own could bring joy, colour and new interests into the life of even a hard-working farmer.

America's entry into the Great War induced him to join the army as a private, but a period of military service did nothing to discourage his interest in music; indeed, he returned to California after the armistice determined to make up for lost time by intensifying his studies. He became a student at the Southern Branch of the University of California, and attended all his lectures



in the evenings because he was obliged to drive a truck during the daytime in order to pay his fees.

During his first term at the University he decided to take up music professionally, so he approached Arthur Farwell, the American composer, and asked to be accepted as a pupil. For two years they worked together, during which time Harris composed an *Andante* for orchestra and had the good fortune to get it accepted by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra for one of their summer concerts at the Lewisohn Stadium in 1926. This confirmed in Farwell's mind a notion he had been harbouring for months: that Roy Harris would in time become one of America's leading composers.

Seeking wider experience, Harris then went to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger, and in 1927 won the coveted Guggenheim Fellowship Award. His Concerto for string quartet, piano and clarinet was written at this time, and was followed by his Piano Sonata and Piano Quintet, all of which aroused considerable interest in critical circles, but did not, in those days, appear in the programmes of many public concerts.

In 1929, when he was still in Paris, he was involved in an accident which fractured his spine. He was taken to a Paris hospital and in due course recovered sufficiently to permit him to make the return journey to New York, where an operation was performed. During his period of convalescence he was compelled to lie flat upon his back for many weeks, but the physical discomfort seemed to have a remarkable effect upon his creative powers as far as music was concerned. He found himself lying still for hour after hour with music ringing in his mind and an irrepressible yearning to write it down on paper. So he sent for a pencil and a few pages of manuscript paper and began to compose again. At first, his inability to try passages over on a piano seemed to emphasize the disadvantage under which he was working, but within a day or two he discovered that he could hear mentally even the most complicated phrases as he sketched them in, and more important still, he found he could write down all those elusive little musical ideas that too often disappear from the composer's mind as soon as he tries to verify their shape on the keyboard. Under these conditions, Roy Harris wrote a string quartet, and when it was played to him he was overjoyed to find that this freedom from the restrictions of the keyboard had materialized in a composition that was incomparably more fluent than his previous works. Moreover, this ability to "think in

sound" so clearly and precisely had evidently become a permanent accomplishment, because it did not wane as his physical strength returned. For this, the accident alone was responsible, and he acknowledges that it put him ten years ahead as far as the composer's technique is concerned.

From that time, Roy Harris's progress was rapid. More and more of the younger musicians paid him homage; his works were performed all over the country, and (proof of the profession's recognition of him as a composer) he began to receive commissions for new works. The award of a Fellowship by the Pasadena Music and Arts Association in 1931 came as further encouragement, and two years later he was recommended by the Library of Congress in Washington for an appointment on the teaching staff of the famous Westminster Choir School, Princetown, N.J., where he stayed until 1938. Then he spent four years in New York composing most of the time, and in 1941 was appointed to the staff of Cornell University.

There, briefly, is the life story of one of America's most promising young composers: a country boy who has made his way from a log cabin to a residentiary professorship at a world-famous University. I have called him "young," by the way, because although he is now middle-aged, nobody seems to regard Roy Harris as anything but a very clever young man. At Cornell everybody speaks of him with enthusiasm, but it will not be as an academician that his name will take its place in the history of American music: his personality as a composer is too strong and individualistic to be overshadowed by his reputation as a teacher. His music is clear-cut and virile, it is modern, but rarely borders upon the extreme.

One of the most important of his earlier works is the *1933 Symphony*, which was first performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in January 1934 and recorded shortly afterwards by Columbia. In the programme of the concert at Boston, Harris wrote of this symphony thus: "In the first movement I have tried to capture the mood of adventure and physical exuberance; in the second, of the pathos which seems to underlie all human existence; in the third, the mood of a positive will to power and action."

A curious composition is his *Symphony for Voices*, which he wrote for the Westminster Choir in 1936. It is based on Walt Whitman's words: movements one and two take their text from that poet's *Sea-drift*:

"Today a rude brief recitative,  
Of ships sailing the seas,  
Of unnamed heroes in the ships  
Of dashing spray and the winds piping and blowing."

The third and last movement uses the same poet's *Inscriptions* :

"Of life immense in passion, pulse and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing."

This work is not easily appreciated. It is more interesting to the student of modern music than to those who seek a choral work for public performance. It has some very effective passages, but as a whole it would probably be received coldly by an English audience of to-day. The singers, if members of the average English choral society, would probably mutiny, anyway, because of the demands made upon their vocal organs!

Harris's *Time Suite* was commissioned by the Columbia Broadcasting System and was given its *première* by that organisation in August 1937. In explaining this work, Harris said: "The minute is a unit of space in music, just as the square foot is a unit to the mural artist. We need to fill that minute as an organic thing for which the music seemingly has grown." The six movements are called: 1. *Broadway* (presto); 2. *Religion* (a contrapuntal movement for muted strings, based on the Phrygian and Lydian modes); 3. *Youth* (a rather wild fantasia); 4. *March of Time* (in four sections, each linked by the sound of a locomotive whistle); 5. *Philosophy* (based on diatonic and chromatic scales); 6. *Labour* (a finale depicting power, concluding after a steady crescendo in an impressive climax).

With his Third Symphony (1938), Roy Harris won the allegiance of a far greater public than he had attracted hitherto. Describing it in *Modern Music*, G. H. L. Smith wrote: "... there is no work equal to it in American music-making. For significance of material, breadth of treatment, and depth of meaning; for tragic implication, dramatic intensity and concentration; for moving beauty, glowing sound, it can find no peer in the musical art of America." Its first performance in Britain was at one of the London Summer Concerts in 1942, when it was played by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult. Commenting on the performance, the *Musical Times*, which invariably reflects intelligent English opinion, remarked: "... Harris appears to have little faith in the essential qualities of a theme. He seems to say to us 'See what I can make of this trifle,' as many others

have done before him. But while others generally fail to impress us, Harris does hold our interest, from start to finish conveying an impression of an original mind. If the themes are not attractive in themselves, the treatment to which they are submitted is arresting and novel. Harris uses the orchestra as it has never been used before—as a sort of heavenly organ, or rather as a combination of organs corresponding with the three families of instruments of the orchestra—strings, wood and brass. One wonders how such a symphony will wear. It is just possible that Harris undervalues the importance of a good, meaty subject. But the first performance certainly kindled a desire for closer acquaintance with the work of a clever artist."

Roy Harris's *Folk-song Symphony* (1940), for chorus and orchestra, brought him an award from the National Committee for Music Appreciation. In the same year he was commissioned to write his *American Creed*, a symphonic work in two movements called "Free to Dream" and "Free to Build." Other recent works from his pen include two ballets *Western Landscape* (1940) and *From this Earth* (1941) commissioned by the Colorado Springs Art Center; *Challenge* for chorus and orchestra (1940); *Evening Piece* for orchestra (1941); *Ode to Truth* (1941); *Acceleration* (1942); and a Concerto for piano and "symphonic band" (1942).

Harris is tall and slim, bordering upon lankiness. He has fair hair and eyes of a greyish-blue, and speaks with a Western accent that occasionally suggests a streak of cynicism in his personality. Mentally, he is remarkably agile, in other subjects as well as in music. His general outlook as far as music is concerned may be summed up in the statement that he has great faith in a new classicism, and believes that the near future will bring one more "golden age" in music before a revolution in the art sweeps away our present systems of notation and scales and even the instruments with which we are now acquainted.

# Paul Hindemith



**PAUL HINDEMITH** was born at Hanau, Germany, on November 16th 1895, of Silesian parents. The violin was his first love, and he became sufficiently accomplished a player at the age of twelve to take minor engagements in theatres, at balls, and other social events. He then added the viola as his second instrument, and also became absorbed in the delights of composition.

At the Hoch Conservatoire at Frankfurt he studied under Arnold Mendelssohn during the early part of his training, but concluded his student days with Bernhard Sekles, who apparently instilled the creed of the moderns with the utmost thoroughness. One of Hindemith's earliest works, the String Quartet in C was awarded the Mendelssohn prize at the Berlin Hochschule, but it was never published.

Composing had to be a spare time activity when Hindemith was a young man, for he had by then become a member of the orchestra at the Frankfurt Opera House. In quite a short time he rose to the position of conductor, which he held until 1923. His great interest in chamber music led him to assemble the Amar String Quartet, in which he played the viola for eight years. This little ensemble, led by Licco Amar, toured all over Europe and made a great reputation for its members. Hindemith wrote most of his early work for it, including the Second String Quartet which was given an enthusiastic welcome at the Donaueschingen Festival in 1921.

The first festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music brought several of Hindemith's works to the notice of critics from all parts of the world, and by 1927 he had become recognized as one of the leading figures in modern German music.

He was then appointed to a professorship at the Berlin Hochschule and reached his maturity as a composer early in the nineteen-thirties, when he wrote his *Concert Music* for strings and brass (1931), his *Philharmonic Concerto* (1932), and his oratorio *Das Unaufhörliche* which was first broadcast from London by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Chorus with the boys of

St. Margaret's, Westminster, and St. Mark's, North Audley Street. The conductor was Sir Henry Wood, and the soloists included Harold Williams and Parry Jones. Despite the complexity of this beautiful and colourful work, it won the hearts of many who had previously regarded Hindemith as one of the incomprehensibles.

Writing in the *Revue Musicale* during the summer of 1933, Andreas Liess summed up Hindemith's work in these words: "Even in his earliest, romantically-coloured works, Hindemith asserts his true self; his splendid dynamism, his sense of form and of rhythm. The output of his maturity shows him concerned, first and last, with the problem of modern music for the masses. The new European style, represented chiefly by Stravinsky, is that not only of a reaction against subjectivism and the tendency to overstrain the musical medium, but of a musical language accessible to all.

"Hindemith's aim," Liess continues, "is to make modern music accesible to the mass of the plain people. He is no artist discovering new paths, nor one concerned with abstract problems. He is essentially a practical musician; one who logically develops in a new direction elements already known.

"We are accustomed to judge works of art from a historical point of view, to expect to find in them original impulses and hitherto unknown problems. We ought to learn to judge them from the purely aesthetic standpoint. Then we shall see that music such as Hindemith's exists *per se* and not by virtue of the composer's personality."

Throughout 1934 there was agitation in the Nazi party against Hindemith on account of his sympathy for the Jews, and this culminated in an official ban on the performance of his works. That the authorities could act so spitefully amazed Dr. Wilhelm Furtwaengler, and he made an indignant protest. This was completely ignored by the Kulturgemeinde, so Furtwaengler immediately resigned his conductorship of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, his directorship of the Berlin State Opera, and his office as Deputy President of the Reich Chamber of Music.<sup>1</sup>

The magazine *Die Musik* contended that Hindemith was unendurable from the cultural and political point of view, and it published a proclamation by the Kulturgemeinde which ran: "We shall neither have works by him performed under our auspices, nor have anything to do with institutions that have them performed . . . He is clever enough an artist to adjust himself to the requirements of the new cultural conditions, but his

<sup>1</sup> In the following year Furtwaengler expressed regret to the Nazis for his intervention in "political" matters and was restored to his former offices!

whole career shows that he is not to be trusted. His materialistic and nihilistic works are no longer performed, it is true ; but they are available in printed form ; they can be bought and studied. This is sufficient proof that he and his co-authors together with their publishers have not abjured them."

The same magazine then published the comments of Alfred Rosenberg: " In this question we find two opposing ideologies: one side considers everything in the light of mere artistic endeavour ; the other—the National Socialist—realizes that an artist generally represents political trends . . . When a man like Hindemith . . . lives and works for fourteen years in Jewish company and feels himself at home in that company, when he associates almost exclusively with Jews, and is loved by them, when he . . . commits the foulest perversion of German music, we have a right to reject him and his environment. The accomplishments of such an artist . . . are of no value to our movement."

" It is a pity " Rosenberg continued, " that so great an artist as Dr. Wilhelm Furtwaengler has entered personally into this controversy, and has chosen to identify himself with Hindemith's cause."

Then Dr. Goebbels himself made a violent attack upon Hindemith in a broadcast denouncing that composer's comic opera *Neues vom Tage* (written in 1929) because of the scene in which a lady appears in her bath. " Opportunity creates not only thieves " he bawled " . . . but atonal musicians who, in order to make a sensation, exhibit on the stage nude women in a bathtub in the most disgusting and obscene situations, and further, befoul these scenes with the most atrocious dissonance of musical impotence."

In December 1934 Hindemith came to London to conduct a broadcast performance of his recently-completed opera-symphony *Mathis der Maler*, which is descriptive of three pictures by the sixteenth-century painter Matthias Grünewald. After that he spent much of his time in travelling because of the depressing conditions in Germany. He made prolonged visits to Turkey, where he stayed with Licco Amar, the leader of his former quartet, and on two or three occasions toured America.

He was in London in January 1936 when King George V died, and wrote a composition for solo viola and string quartet entitled *Funeral Music* for performance at the Queen's Hall instead of his Viola Concerto.

*Der Schwanendreher*, for viola and small orchestra, was first

performed in London at a Courtauld-Sargent concert on December 6th 1937. This work, in three movements and based on folk-song, is intended to portray a fiddler "who comes among merry company and performs the music he has brought with him from afar: songs grave and gay, and to conclude, a dance. As a true musician he extends and adorns the tunes; he preludes and invents, according to the extent of his imagination and ability."

In the same year Clarence Raybould conducted a BBC concert-performance of his opera *Cardillac*, which was written as early as 1926. Guido Pannain, describing the work, once said that "All Hindemith is in *Cardillac*, . . . all the good and bad features of his temperament . . . In this opera there is greater musical work than in almost all the symphonic compositions of the same composer put together."

Hindemith's latest works include his ballet *Nobilissima Visione* (based on the Conversion of St. Francis) produced at Drury Lane in the summer of 1938 with choreography by Massine; *Philharmonic Dances* (1937); Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1939); Concerto for 'Cello and Orchestra (1940); a ballet overture *Cupid and Psyche* (1944) and various sonatas.

His textbook on the groundwork of composition *Unterweisung im Tonsatz* explains in detail his methods of writing music. They are based entirely upon the laws of acoustics, and of course are intended to supersede the old rules of harmony and counterpoint. He rejects the old systems of chords, diatonic scales, and such like, but he also refuses to adopt the modern systems which split the scale mechanically. "The semitone" he asserts, "can be varied considerably according to its place in the scale, and the artist's aesthetic instinct finds the true answer in each particular case." Apart from the basic laws of sound, Hindemith acknowledges no musical rules of any kind, because he believes that they are merely a waste of time, and unnecessarily restrict the artist. "No chord," he says, "can be regarded as ungrammatical if its use seems essential to the composer." It might be added that several critics thought that this book was directed not merely against academic reaction in music (that is obvious!) but against the theories expounded by Schönberg and Krenek.

Since the outbreak of the Second World War, Hindemith has spent most of his time in America. He is now a professor at Yale University.



# Arthur Honegger



ALTHOUGH Honegger was a member of the prominent little group known as "The French Six," and has always been regarded as one of the most influential figures in modern French music, all his forbears were Swiss. He was born at Le Havre on March 10th 1892, and had such a natural aptitude for music that he composed dozens of little pieces even before he began to study music seriously.

When he was thirteen he took lessons from R. C. Martin, an organist of Le Havre, and after four years went to the Zurich Conservatoire. Returning to Le Havre when he was nineteen, he arranged to take a further course at the Paris Conservatoire, despite the amount of travelling involved, and there he came under the guidance of André Gédalge for composition, and Lucien Capet for the violin. Two years later he settled in Paris and then received additional instruction from Widor and d'Indy.

His life at that time was quite uneventful: practically the whole of his time was taken up with the study of the works of J. S. Bach, which he admires above everything else in music, and of such composers as Debussy, Strauss, Max Reger, Schönberg and Stravinsky.

After writing some songs, he produced his Sonata for Violin and Piano in 1916, and then one or two interesting orchestral works, notably the prelude to Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine et Sélysette* and *Le Chant de Nigamon*, besides a certain amount of chamber music.

Nevertheless, he was still very unsettled concerning the style he wanted to adopt when with the collaboration of his friend Milhaud he formed a group called "Les Nouveaux Jeunes," who gave a series of concerts at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier. It was at this theatre, by the way, that Honegger's first major work, a masque called *Le Dit des Jeux du Monde* was first performed on December 2nd 1918 and provoked an uproar in the audience. The group afterwards became known as "Les Six," of whom I shall have more to say in my sketch of Milhaud.

The immediate post-war period, which caused some composers

to indulge in various types of musical frivolity produced just the opposite effect upon Honegger. His musical outlook became serious and austere, and he concentrated upon a contrapuntal style that produced particularly harsh results. Still, his *Pastorale d'Été* (1920) brought him the Prix Verley, and not long afterwards his "mimed symphony" *Horace Victorieux* drew high praise from some of the more advanced critics, and ridicule from most of the others. One eminent English critic described the work as "madness pure and simple."

Honegger reached his maturity, I think, with the "dramatic psalm" *Le Roi David*, which was first performed in Switzerland in the summer of 1921. This oratorio, based upon the drama by René Murax, contains some really exciting passages quite foreign to the conventional type of oratorio to which most of us in this country are accustomed: there are touches of daring barbarity here and there, psalms shouted in wild excitement (not the meditative ones, of course!), and a modern Alleluia chorus which, one feels, tries to develop on fugal lines but doesn't quite succeed. This oratorio stirred up interest—and a certain amount of controversy—in at least a dozen countries, and was given several performances during the ensuing years.

The schoolboy love of railway engines never abated in Arthur Honegger, and in 1923 he decided to portray a powerful American locomotive in music. The result was *Pacific 231* a "mouvement symphonique." In an interview<sup>1</sup> he explained: "I have always had a passion for locomotives. To me they are living beings whom I love as others love women or horses. In *Pacific 231* I have not aimed to imitate the noise of an engine, but rather to express in terms of music a visual impression and physical enjoyment. The piece opens with an 'objective' contemplation, the quiet breathing of the engine at rest, the straining at starting, the gradually increasing speed, and finally reaches the lyrical pathetic state of a fast train, three hundred tons of weight, thundering through the silence of the night at a mile a minute. The subject of my composition was an engine of the 'Pacific' type number 231 used for heavy loads and built for speed."

My own recollections of this work are vague and I have not seen the score, but it is described by Nicholas Slonimsky in the following terms,<sup>2</sup> which do not appear to correspond exactly in detail with Honegger's own statement: "The composition starts in screeching strings *sul ponticello*, flutes flutter-tonguing in perfect onomatopoeia; the rhythmic pulsations are accelerated from the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Music Since 1900*, by Nicolas Slonimsky.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

whole notes to dotted half-notes, undotted half-notes, half-notes in triplets, quarter-notes, and finally eighth notes, the while horns and trumpets sing their angular song of the rails and switches, coming to a fugato with an iterative insistent subject; then at full speed in sixteenth-notes, the trombones chanting powerfully at the top of their register, the piccolos steam-whistling, the violins speeding *saltando*, marking the rapid rotation of the wheels; the entire orchestra is now puffing heavily, until the brakes are applied, causing deceleration of rhythmic pulsations from the sixteenth-notes to the eighths in triplets, simple eighths, quarter notes in triplets, simple quarter-notes, half-notes, dotted half-notes, finally pulling in on a whole note on a unison C-sharp, a full stop."

This interesting work had a mixed reception when it was played for the first time in Paris under Koussevitzky in 1924: praise was lavish, but so was the invective. The latter was capped by a spiteful notice written by a composer-critic who called it "pornographic." How this epithet could be applied to such a composition as this is not explained.

Honegger's next important works were *Concertino* for piano and orchestra, which makes use of jazz rhythms in its concluding movement, and the biblical opera *Judith* which was first performed under his own direction at the Monte Carlo Opera House in February 1926.

In 1928 he turned to a most unusual source for inspiration: a game of Rugby, and as one would imagine, the result was an exceptionally lively piece for orchestra. *Rugby* was played at the inaugural concert of the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris. Then followed such works as *Les Cris du Monde* for solo voices and orchestra, a work in which he tried to represent the destiny of man in this mechanized age; the operetta *Les Aventures du Roi Pausole* based on the dissolute story by Pierre Louys, which was first produced at the Bouffes-Parisiennes in December 1930; and the Symphony written for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1931. In the summer of that year his ballet-melodrama *Amphion* was produced at the Paris Opéra.

He then became very interested in the experiments of the musician Maurice Martenot, who had devised an electrical instrument called "Ondes Musicales" (musical waves) which produced sounds something like those of the thermionic stops on the modern cinema organ, and permitted rather fascinating glissando and vibrato effects. Honegger therefore wrote a ballet called *Sémiramis*

(libretto by Paul Valéry) introducing a part for this instrument in the score. It was performed at the Paris Opéra in May 1934, with choreography by Fokine. A representative of the *Musical Times* was present on this occasion and reported:<sup>1</sup> "In the first scene, the music of Honegger ran true to form. There were the vigorous rhythms, the strident brass, the acidulous harmonies. Technically, this was good ballet music. But thereafter the composer's task became more difficult, and frustration dogged his footsteps. How can one write ballet music when to all intents and purposes there is no ballet to write for? The final scene was an anti-climax. If the union of poetry and ballet is really an effective combination, some more convincing proof than *Sémiramis* will have to be found. Mention should be made of Honegger's use of the Martenot musical waves (analogous to Theremin) in his orchestra. The Martenot device does not blend with the other instruments; its unearthly timbre stands out like a white thread on a black cloth. For special effects it is striking, and Honegger undoubtedly used it with skill."

He used this instrument again in his ballet *La Cantique des Cantiques* derived from the *Song of Songs*, which was performed at the Paris Opéra in the spring of 1938. Serge Lifar provided the rhythms for this, and Irving Scherke's criticism<sup>2</sup> ran: "In view of the fact that Honegger's part of the proceedings was not the composition of a score in which he could give free play to his creative imagination, but was instead the musical filling-out of a rhythmic skeleton . . . there is not much to say, unless it be to remark that, under the circumstances, he acquitted himself cleverly and with considerable address. His orchestration, in which he replaces the usual strings with Martenot waves, leans heavily on percussions and choruses, and is productive of a neatly archaic effect." Gabriel Grovlez, writing in *L'Art Musical* said "Honegger was not intended by nature to deal with this sensuous, impassioned Eastern subject. His music is harsh, barbaric, and entirely devoid of the poetry and colours one would naturally have expected . . . There is no lack of impressive effects, however; the end of the second act, especially, is Honegger at his best."

Honegger's later works include the incidental music to Paul Claudel's mystery play *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher* (1938); a Nocturne for orchestra (1939); *Dance of Death* for chorus and orchestra (1939), which was performed recently in Paris; and a splendid *Symphony for Strings*, which was composed in 1941 and performed at least three times in Paris under Charles Münch. It has recently

<sup>1</sup> *Musical Times*, June, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, March, 1938.

been played in London. Mention should also be made of the incidental music which he has recently written (1944) for Jean Giraudoux's new play *Sodom et Gomorrha*, which has been produced in Zurich and Paris.

Henri Prunières says that in the work of Honegger the best qualities of the modern French and German schools meet and blend. "His music, which is wholly atonal, is based entirely upon counterpoint. Simple melodies, with natural inflections, develop one from another. Each instrument in his chamber music, and each group of instruments in his orchestral scores, seems to have its individual life, and speak its own language. There sometimes result dissonances that are rather painful, a harshness that is cruel but never useless."

Honegger is a striking figure. He is large and well built, and has a fine athletic appearance. His massive brow, Roman nose, square jaw and keen penetrating eyes suggest tremendous strength of character, but his happy smile tends to relieve the impression of sternness that one would probably get on meeting him in one of his more serious moods. When he is conducting he stands with his legs wide apart and gives a firm beat in a "nonsense" sort of manner.

He is still tremendously interested in locomotives, but motor-cars claim an even greater part of his attention. To him a sleek, powerful car is a source of inspiration and a means of wonderful exhilaration. He has considerable technical knowledge, and always says that he likes to construct his music as scientifically as an engine is built.

# Aram Khachaturian



**A**LTHOUGH his works were almost unknown in England before the Second World War, Khachaturian has now become known as one of the most promising of the younger Soviet composers. He was awarded the Order of Lenin in 1939, and has on two occasions received the Stalin Prize.

He comes from Tiflis, where he was born in 1904, son of a poor artisan who appears to have supported himself by doing book-binding. Until the Revolution enabled him to go to school he was almost illiterate, and he had no knowledge of music whatever, his only claim being that he was profoundly stirred by the folk-music of his native Armenia. When he reached the age of nineteen he became conscious of an irrepressible urge to express himself through music, and deciding to take advantage of the new cultural amenities then being developed by the Soviet Government, he travelled to Moscow, called at the Gnessin School of Music and demanded a musical education. One can well imagine the astonishment of the staff when they discovered that he had no theoretical knowledge of music and could not even read musical notation! Nevertheless, he was so convinced that he possessed musical talent, and made such an impression upon them by his determination to learn that they arranged for him to study the 'cello. Within two years he had made such excellent progress that Gnessin took him into the little circle of students who studied under his personal direction, and encouraged the diligent young pupil to compose.

In 1926, Khachaturian entered the Moscow Conservatoire where he worked under Litinskoy, Vassilenko, and Nikolai Miaskovsky. He had by then already had a Dance for violin and piano accepted for publication, as well as a poem in Oriental style for the piano. After ten years as a student he graduated in 1934, gaining honours in composition with his First Symphony, which portrays the vivid individuality of the composer and his great love of Armenian folk-music. Georgei Khubov says of it: "This fine composition, particularly its first movement (a monumental *Allegro* with a broad improvisatory introduction) may without

exaggeration be described as an important landmark not only in the composer's creative career but in the general development of Soviet symphonic music . . . it is a lofty epic of the new, strenuous joyous life of work and conflict."

After he left the Conservatoire, Khachaturian became one of the most prolific composers in the Soviet Union, and it would be impossible to mention all his works individually, but I might single out for comment such items as his *Poem to Stalin*, for chorus and orchestra, which became tremendously popular when it was performed at the festivals of Soviet music in Moscow in 1937 and 1938. It is based chiefly on the folk-music of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. I must also mention his ballet *Happiness*, in which he drew upon the colourful folk-dances of those states and of the Ukraine.

Interest in his music was up to this time confined to the Soviet Union, but in the winter of 1937 a concert of his works was given in Paris, and after this, music-lovers in other lands began to hear his name for the first time. His first work to become universally known was the Trio for clarinet, violin and piano which he had composed as early as 1932. This has an intriguing Transcaucasian atmosphere, and concludes with a movement based on a charming Uzbek folk-song.

Then he wrote his first Piano Concerto, which was hailed as a notable event in Soviet music, and aroused considerable attention in the countries of the Western hemisphere. In England it was not heard until Miss Moura Lympany played it at the Queen's Hall on April 13th 1940.

Like most of the Soviet composers, Khachaturian placed his talent at the disposal of the State when Germany attacked Russia in 1941. His first work to help his countrymen in their great struggle was a ballad *Captain Gastello*, which tells of the exploits of a Soviet airman who sacrificed his life by driving his burning 'plane into a column of enemy petrol tanks. Then he wrote a popular song called *Uralochka*, which extols a Soviet girl forging arms in the rear of a battle for her fighting brothers; and popular marches such as *Heroes of the Patriotic War*.

In 1943 he wrote another ballet. This was called *Gayane*, and was produced in the same year by the Leningrad Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet which had temporarily evacuated to the town of Molotov. The action takes place in Armenia, on a flourishing collective farm, and depicts the deadly struggle between the farmers who are trying to carry on with their work and foreign

wreckers who try to burn down a cotton store. The climax is reached on the first day of the war, when picturesque costumes give way to military uniforms, and the orchestra rings out a call to arms.

Khachaturian completed his Second Symphony in 1944, although much of it was planned during the early days of the war. The first movement is one of bitter grief for the unspeakable horrors brought upon the Russian people by the German invaders, and of mourning for the fallen heroes of the Red Army. But sorrow changes to wrath, and the second movement literally seethes with vengeance. These two movements were completed during a summer holiday on the beautiful estate near the town of Ivanova, which the Soviet government had presented to the Composers' Union. (It was here, by the way, that Shostakovich wrote his Eighth Symphony). Khachaturian was trying them over at the piano one morning when a few schoolgirls came into the room and presented him with a huge bunch of wild flowers which they had just gathered. The composer noticed that they were still wet with the morning dew, and proceeded to write his third movement to portray the beauty of that summer morning in the country. The last movement returns to the struggle of the Soviet people, suggesting with its tremendous power the enormous effort they will make to restore the industrial life and prosperity of their land now that the German invaders have been finally crushed. Into this movement is woven the theme of a funeral march for fallen heroes, and the symphony concludes with a hymn-like ode to Russia.

Khachaturian is now the Vice-president of the Union of Soviet Composers and in a communication from Moscow tells how most of the composers of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Minsk were evacuated to the Urals and the Caucasus when the Nazis were advancing into Russia. Thus Prokofiev, for instance, was able to continue work on his opera *War and Peace* undisturbed by the war. In the spring of 1942 a number of composers, including Kabalevsky, Muradelli, Chemberji, Milyutin, Bely and Kruchinin volunteered to visit the front lines to make contact with the men and see the conditions in which they were fighting, so that more appropriate war songs could be written for them. It was after such a visit that Muradelli wrote his famous *Song of the Dovatovites*, which reflects the feats of Major-General Dovator and his valiant cavalry guards. "The present life of our Composers' Union" Khachaturian tells us "is particularly intensive. Our



work centres around the concerts . . . and meetings which are a kind of laboratory test of all that has been written. In Moscow during the past year alone, we have heard new symphonies and symphonic suites by Nikolai Miaskovsky, Dmitri Shostakovich, Sergei Vasilenko, Leonid Polovinkin, Lev Knipper and Fabia Vitachek, besides a new opera *Nadezhda Svetlova* by Ivan Dzerzhinsky and other works by Anatoli Alexandrov, Vissarion Shebalin, Yuri Levitin, Vladimir Shcherbachev, Markian Frolov, Nikolai Rakov, Nina Makarova and others. The problem of creating a repertoire is the daily study of a special commission headed by Isaac Dunayevsky. We receive a tremendous amount of assistance from the 'Musical Fund,' an organisation which deals with musicians' living conditions and which is usually the first publisher and disseminator of new works. The majority of professional composers receive regular monetary subsidies from the State."

# Gian Francesco Malipiero



**G**RANDSON of Francesco Malipiero, who wrote several operas in the middle of the nineteenth century, this eminent Italian composer was more attracted towards painting than music in his early childhood, and if he had not shown such unusual ability as a violinist, he might never have become a musician.

He was born in Venice on March 18th 1882 to parents steeped in music, and began to study the violin and piano at the age of six. The family moved to Berlin in 1893 and shortly afterwards to Vienna where Malipiero had lessons with Stefan Stocker. In this city a wealthy Pole happened to hear the fourteen-year-old Francesco playing his violin, and was so amazed at the boy's talent that he undertook to pay for his musical education. This kind offer settled the question of music as a career, and he then went to the Liceo Benedetto Marcello in Vienna, and later to Bologna, to study with Enrico Bossi.

In 1910 Malipiero married the daughter of a Venetian painter, although he had by no means established himself as a composer. His principal compositions up to this time had been the *Sinfonia del Mare* (1906) and the *Sinfonia del Silenzio e della Morte*, written in the year of his marriage, though why he should have been contemplating silence and death when he had just been given the hand of a charming Venetian girl I really cannot understand! He always insisted on composing in solitude, by the way, if that explains anything.

The Italian people were completely disinterested in his work—most of his efforts were far in advance of the public taste at that time, so in 1913 he went to Paris and met Alfredo Casella, who introduced him to Maurice Ravel and an exciting circle of young musicians of the more advanced school of thought. Having been unable to associate with this type of composer in the past, Malipiero basked in the congenial atmosphere of progressive culture and developed his own ideas with incredible rapidity. In but a few weeks his entire outlook broadened to an extent that would have been unbelievable in former years. New ideas flooded his

brain, and he sketched down dozens of little themes and progressions for future use.

While he was in Paris he decided to enter for the National Music Competition held in Rome. Unable to determine the best work to submit, he thought it would be quite a good plan to send several compositions under different names. Imagine his bewilderment when a few weeks later he opened his newspaper one morning and found that four of the five prizes had been awarded to him! He went to Rome immediately and explained everything, but the newspapers were extremely indignant, and there was a great deal of ill-feeling in many quarters. One of his prize works, a poem for 'cello and orchestra called *Arione* was performed on December 21st 1913 at the Augusteo, but there was a demonstration against him by members of the audience.

After writing various piano pieces, he composed a little orchestral suite called *Armenia* (1917) based on popular Armenian tunes, and such works as *Pause del Silenzio* which consists of seven "symphonic expressions" of the spirit of softness, crudity, melancholy, gaiety, mystery, war and savagery. This was heard for the first time at the Augusteo in Rome on January 27th 1918 when Bernardo Molinari conducted, and made a very favourable impression upon the critics.

He had by that time written two of his three series of *Impressioni del Vero* (Impressions from Nature) which took the fancy of many thousands of music lovers and did as much to establish him with the more ordinary listener as his *Pause del Silenzio* did with the critics.

In 1921 his symphonic "illustration of legendary love-scenes, tournaments and battles" called *Per una Favola Cavalleresca* was performed in Rome under Antonio Guarnieri, and then he was appointed to a professorship at the Parma Conservatorio. He stayed there for about two years, but then found that his academic duties interfered with his activities as a composer, and retired. When he left Parma he took a house at Asolo, a little village in the Veneto, not far from Venice, and spent the whole of his time in composing. Such works as his choral mystery play *San Francesco d'Assisi* were written while he was at the Conservatorio, and he also founded La Corporazione delle Nuove Musiche, an Italian branch of the International Society for Contemporary Music, with the assistance of Gabrielle d'Annunzio and Alfredo Casella.

Towards the end of 1923 he discovered, quite by accident, manuscripts of seven ancient Italian songs. He took these and

wove them into a musical fairy tale *La Principessa Ulalia*, a pleasing little work.

Malipiero has written all types of music : symphonies, chamber music, operas, ballets, choral works, songs and piano pieces, and many of them are in an interesting and unconventional form. Take his *Concerti*, for instance, which he wrote in 1931. This is not a concerto, but a series of miniatures in which the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, drums and double-basses each in turn play an important part. Of unusual interest, too, are his *Variazioni senza Tema* (Variations without a Theme) which he wrote in 1924.

In many of his operas, Malipiero followed Wagner's example and wrote his own libretti, drawing upon old Italian poetry for the purpose. One of the exceptions is *La Favola del Figlio Cambiato*, based on the play by Luigi Pirandello, which was part of that author's great unfinished work *I Giganti della Montagna* (The Giants of the Mountains). It was first produced with great success at Brunswick, Germany, but when it was staged in Rome in the spring of 1934 the audience revolted because of its somewhat unconventional moral theme. By the time the opera was half way through Fascists in the audience had become so troublesome that Malipiero was obliged to leave the building. Fascist bigots ran to Mussolini with reports of the disturbance, and on the following day the Duce banned the opera for "moral incongruity."

The first of Malipiero's String Quartets, *Rispetti e Strambotti*, won the Coolidge Prize in America and encouraged him to write several other works that come under the heading of chamber music. Of these mention should be made of *Ricercari* (Researches) and *Ritrovati* (Discoveries), which are scored for the most unusual ensemble of four violas, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, 'cello and bass. Even more extraordinary is his quartet *Epodi e Giambi* for oboe, viola, violin and bassoon ! The success of these three works depends entirely upon the maintenance of perfect balance. If this is achieved, they are most effective ; if not, the result is grotesque.

Writing in *Anbruch* some years ago Hans F. Redlich declared that the music of Malipiero's maturity is the outcome of a "remarkably organic evolution. His melody owes much to Monteverdi and to the masters of the madrigal, and also to the old church music ; in his harmony are associated Debussy's sensitive lyricism and Stravinsky's tense purposefulness ; and his rhythm was evolved under both French and Russian influences. He lacks the

Italian *brio*, but shows a fine sense of structure. His music is refined and spacious. Our time has too few masters in whose work inspiration and craftsmanship, conviction and integrity co-operate so efficiently."

Malipiero's later works include the *Seconda Sinfonia Elegiaca* (1937); two operas after Shakespeare *Giulio Cesare* (1935) and *Antonio e Cleopatra* (1938); *Missa pro Mortuis* (Requiem Mass: 1938); Second Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1938), the 'Cello Concerto, written in the same year, and the recently completed opera *Ecuba* (after Euripides).

At the present time he is the Professor of Advanced Composition at the Conservatorio Musicale, Venice, and of the History of Music at the University of Padua. He has a deep love of prose and has written various books on music and the theatre, besides publishing editions of the old masters. A stern critic, Malipiero is not afraid to express his dislike of many of the works of the older Italian composers—notably Verdi.

# Nicolai Miaskovsky



AS far as I am aware, Miaskovsky is the only living composer of any importance who has written over twenty symphonies. His work as a composer and teacher has brought him great respect in the Soviet Union and recognition as one of the most prominent of the older composers in Russia to-day. Many of his symphonies have been played in the capitals of western Europe, and in America, yet (except during the Great War) he has never set foot outside his native country.

He was born in the fortress of Novogeorgieusk—not far from Warsaw—on April 20th 1881, son of a general in the Russian Army who, in due course, sent him to the Nijni-Novgorod Cadet College to prepare for a military career. His mother died when he was quite young, and his up-bringing was chiefly in the hands of an aunt who had been a member of the opera company at St. Petersburg. She taught him to play the piano and encouraged his interest in music by taking him to the opera whenever the family's rather limited means would permit such a luxury. Miaskovsky can still recall the thrill he experienced when he first heard Glinka's *Ivan Sussanin*.

At the military academy the young cadet found some difficulty in keeping up his piano practice: there was apparently only one instrument available and when this was not in use by the elder students, there was always somebody ready to object to the monotony of scale-playing. In his autobiography, Miaskovsky records that he was often compelled to interrupt his practice for the purpose of fighting a defensive action against militant students who objected to his presence at the piano. When his father was moved to St. Petersburg he was transferred to a similar institution in that city, and there spent so much time at the piano that the authorities decided that he was neglecting his work, and forbade him to touch the instrument. He promptly took to the violin, and before any objection could be raised, persuaded Kazani the conductor of the school's band to make him a member of the string ensemble. So he got his own way in the end. Kazani, by the way, was a fearfully irate gentleman who used to fly into such

frenzies that he invariably broke his baton upon the music stand. The supply of sticks eventually came to an end—the governors evidently got tired of providing them—and Kazani was obliged to conduct with the leg of a dismembered chair.

Respecting his father's wishes, Miaskovsky entered the Academy of Military Engineers in 1899 for a further three years' course, and although he enjoyed the companionship of the intellectual young men he found there, he grew to dislike the profession of arms, and allowed his interest to be entirely absorbed by the various musical activities of his spare time. Nevertheless, he finished his course, received a commission, and was sent to Moscow.

In the capital, he consulted Taneiev concerning his prospects as a composer, and was advised to study harmony with Reingold Gliere in his spare time. In 1905 he was posted to St. Petersburg, and took advantage of this move to become a part-time student at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, where he studied under Liadov.

Two years later he was allowed to resign his commission, but before long was faced with financial difficulties. A demand from the bursar of the Conservatoire for a fee of two hundred and fifty roubles made him realize that the life of an impecunious music student was not an easy one. He had just finished his First Symphony, and believing that its style would not please Liadov, he decided to take it to the eminent Glazounov.

Miaskovsky was surprised to find that Glazounov was most willing to scrutinize the work, and could scarcely believe his ears when the distinguished composer pronounced a most favourable report and awarded him a scholarship on the strength of it. Thus his first major work solved his financial difficulties and set his course for the future. The symphony was first performed some years later in St. Petersburg.

He graduated in 1911 with two string quartets, and left the Conservatoire in the same year. Shortly afterwards a symphonic poem which he had written in 1909, *Silence*, was given its first performance in Moscow, and was immediately acclaimed as a great success. His Second Symphony and *Alastor*, another symphonic poem, were played with equal success in 1912, and he then took a teaching post which he held until he was called up as an officer of the reserve at the outbreak of the Great War.

For three years he was fighting on the Austrian front, and then after being wounded at Tallinn, received a staff appointment in Moscow which occupied most of his time until 1921. On his

demobilisation he was given a professorship at the Moscow Conservatoire.

The length of this sketch will not permit reference to all his symphonies, so we now come to his Sixth, a work inspired by the French revolutionary songs *Ça ira* and *La Carmagnole*, which he heard in 1922. Referring to this composition in an article in *Sovietskaya Muzika*, Miaskovsky writes "... the absence of a theoretically fortified and rational world-outlook created in me some sort of an intelligentsia-like neurotic and sacrificial conception of the Revolution, and it was naturally reflected in my conception of the Sixth Symphony." It was first performed under Golovanov's baton in Moscow in May 1924.

His Tenth Symphony, which he says "was an answer . . . to an urge I had felt for a long time—to give utterance to the scenes of anxiety and confusion of the hero of Pushkin's *Knight of Brass*" was given its *première* by the "Persimfans": the experimental conductorless orchestra that aroused a great deal of controversy in Moscow in 1928.

Three years later, Miaskovsky made up his mind to write one or two symphonic works based on song and dance material, and just at that time the Soviet Government was making far-reaching plans to revolutionize the economic life of the nation. To use his own words<sup>1</sup> "When the first call to collectivization of agriculture was sounded, I was very much impressed by this measure, which seemed so revolutionary in its procedure . . . almost instantly, I conceived the musical image of a symphony about rural life in three stages: before, during, and after the struggle for the new order. In the autumn of 1931 I began work on my project . . ." This work became known as the "Collective Farm Symphony" and was dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of the October Revolution. The first performance, on June 1st 1932, was given in Moscow under the direction of our own Albert Coates.

This was followed by the Thirteenth Symphony, which Miaskovsky himself admits to be "... a very pessimistic work which I, in my creative blindness, regarded as an emotional experience. It proved to be an error. It has remained a page in my diary." I believe I am correct in stating that it was first heard in America when Frederick Stock conducted it with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra on November 15th 1934. It was broadcast by the BBC some years later, and struck W. R. Anderson<sup>2</sup> as being "... subdued and darkly plaintive music, with a scherzo

<sup>1</sup> *Sovietskaya Muzika*.

<sup>2</sup> *Musical Times*, February, 1938.



mildly interesting intellectually. . . . It is fair to say that this was not nearly so tiring or nerve-straining as some of the novelties we are invited to hear."

A pleasant and beautiful work is the Fifteenth Symphony : an optimistic and lyrically emotional *opus* that found favour with the Russian audiences when it was first performed by the Radio Orchestra of Moscow in October, 1935, but the most popular in Russia at the present time is his Sixteenth Symphony, which he dedicated to the Soviet Air Force.

For Stalin's sixtieth birthday in 1939 Miaskovsky wrote a *Festival Overture* and a symphonic poem *From the Very Soul*, based on words by Djambal. In the following year his Twenty-first Symphony received the Stalin Award of a hundred thousand roubles. It is a simple, emotional work for a small orchestra.

The Twenty-second Symphony is a rousing call to the people of the Soviet Union to rise in vengeance against the Nazi hordes who brought such widespread misery to their towns and villages ; the Twenty-third is a more restrained work in three movements based on Kabardino and Balkarian folksongs ; and the Twenty-fourth, of which I know nothing at present, was performed recently in Moscow by the State Symphony Orchestra under Radinsky. By the time this book appears in print there will probably be at least two more Miaskovsky symphonies !

Miaskovsky is regarded as the founder of Soviet symphonic music, and is one of the finest teachers in the Union. He has always recognised Tschaikovsky as the one and only complete symphonist after Beethoven, and is a great admirer of the work of Scriabin, Schönberg, Debussy and his own compatriot Prokofiev. Bach and Chopin mean little to him. It is perhaps significant that he was the founder of the Union of Soviet Composers, established in 1919. He is a shy, reticent personality, known best by his former pupils, who include Khachaturian, Shebalin, Muradelli, Victor Bely and Dimitri Kabalevsky. A doctor's degree for research in arts was conferred upon him some time ago.

# Darius Milhaud



IN modern French music, one of the most prominent characters for years has been Darius Milhaud. He was born at Aix-en-Provence on September 4th 1892, and studied in Paris at the Conservatoire under Gédalge, Widor and d'Indy, gaining prizes for counterpoint, fugue and violin. Before he could finish his course the Great War broke out and seriously interfered with his studies.

In 1917 he became an attaché at the French Legation in Rio de Janeiro and met Paul Claudel, who became very interested in his compositions and wrote the libretti for several of his early works for the theatre.

Returning to Paris in 1919, Milhaud became associated with five other young French composers: Honegger, Poulenc, Tailleferre, Durey and Auric, and agreed to their suggestion that they should form a little "school" of their own. Thus originated "The French Six," as they became known: a band of young musicians working under the guidance of Erik Satie and Vincent d'Indy and leading the revolt against the Impressionism that was dominating French music at that time.

There can be no doubt that "The French Six" exerted an important influence upon the development of French music in those days. Not only were they intensely sincere, dynamic musicians, but leaders of the still younger musical circles because of their popularity with those of fashion and advanced thought. They first met in a painter's studio at the Rue Huyghens, and it was here that they gave their early concerts of chamber music to a little fraternity. News of their activities spread rapidly among Parisian music-lovers, and it was not long before public interest in the composers enabled them to move to the Théâtre des Vieux-Colombier. Here, they might have accomplished great things, but as one might expect, six highly-temperamental young musicians were not likely to agree for long. Auric soon began to find fault with Satie's judgment and took to criticizing in no uncertain terms. A tempestuous row was of course the inevitable culmination of this, and within a little while one after another dropped out of the coterie. I might add, however, that before they dis-

solved they all collaborated in writing the music to a ballet by Jean Cocteau called *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*. It was produced by the Ballet Suédois in Paris in the summer of 1921.

By this time, Darius Milhaud had an impressive list of compositions to his credit including various orchestral works, a ballet, a "musical novel" called *La Brébis Egarée*, a "cinema-symphony on South American airs" called *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, four string quartets and various sonatas for piano, violin, flute, oboe and clarinet.

In 1922 Milhaud visited America to lecture, conduct and give recitals. Enthusiasm and great kindness welcomed him wherever he went, but little did he think that a Second World War in 1939 would eventually compel him to enter that country as a refugee. Ever since the fall of France in 1940 he has spent most of his time in America teaching, composing and occasionally conducting.

To refer even briefly to his many compositions would be quite impossible in the small amount of space I have available here, but it is rather interesting to note his own remarks on the score of *À Propos de Bottes* because they indicate his views upon an important matter. This piece of music, by the way, is "a musical story for children" which he wrote in 1932 for a series called *La Musique en famille et à l'école*. "The aim of this work is to put contemporary French musicians in touch with amateurs of all ages. The taste for music must be encouraged so that this sublime art may resume its place in the home. It seems that amateurs who used to get together to play ensemble music have gradually abandoned this pastime so necessary for the development of musical culture. The mechanical music which has penetrated everywhere does not give a pleasure similar to that felt by amateurs who like to play music themselves. It is necessary that these amateurs, without relinquishing the masterpieces of the past, enter into contact with contemporary music. It is incumbent upon composers to write all kinds of music, for amateurs as well as children and schools. The music must be easy to perform, while preserving the character of our epoch and the personality of the composer. We hope in this manner to create a constant collaboration between the amateurs and composers of to-day."

To a large majority of listeners at the present time, there is much of Milhaud's music that is difficult to appreciate, but fortunately, his work is so varied that we are almost bound to find something acceptable to us unless we are the sworn enemies of modern music. In the opinion of Aaron Copland, one of the

most enlightened of contemporary composers, Milhaud's music is "a spontaneous outpouring of the emotions in terms of pure music."

His compositions for the theatre are of special importance, and they have won him no small amount of popularity. When his music for Claudel's drama *L'Annonce fait à Marie* was performed in Paris early in 1934, Henri Prunierès wrote: "Milhaud's Partiture is among the most beautiful and completely realized of his works. The music seems to enclose the drama, which it leads step by step in its own medium of sound; a vibrant background whence issue the words of the actors. There are subtle impressions of pity, faith, love and grief. Here and there is a great fresco, like a prelude which depicts Aurora; or the Angelus which seems to sound through the clangorous contest of innumerable bells the sad 'symphony' of departure, or the dolorous resignation of Winter at the noble and poignant Funeral March . . . The music communicates directly to our senses the profound significance of Claudel's drama and greatly aids the poetic text."

Opinion in England is not quite as enthusiastic—perhaps we have not had sufficient opportunities of hearing Milhaud's work to enable us to appreciate it, for like most modern music, it has to be heard two or three times before one can make a fair criticism. After the performance of some of his work in Paris just before the present war, the *Musical Times* declared: "Milhaud . . . is one of those rare musicians gifted with the power to renew themselves. It is a pity that he writes so much, that each season he brings out not two or three but five or six new works, that he occupies himself with operas and ballets, orchestral music, quartets, choral pieces, songs, music for the theatre and films. With so many scores on his hands a composer cannot give proper care to each note and page. It is rarely, however, that a work by Milhaud fails to be at least interesting, or to bear signs of extraordinary talent."

At the Promenade concerts in London, one of the most widely appreciated of his works in recent years was the *Suite Provençale*. His film music includes a score for Jean Renoir's adaptation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

# Sergei Prokofiev



MANY of our more enlightened musical authorities believe Prokofiev to be the greatest composer of the Soviet Union at the present time, notwithstanding the ever-growing popularity of his brilliant young compatriot, Shostakovich, who is fifteen years his junior.

Sergei Prokofiev was born in the village of Sontzovka in the Ekaterinoslav region of South Russia, which is now known as the Dnepropetrov district, on April 11th (April 23rd in the modern calendar) 1891. His father was the manager of a vast agricultural estate which he administered for the absentee landlords. The greater part of it consisted of expanses of steppe.

Writing in *Sovietskaya Muzika*, Prokofiev tells us that his mother, a native of St. Petersburg, played the piano exceptionally well, and that her devotion to the works of Beethoven and Chopin gave him a taste for serious music from his earliest days. "When I was three years old" he says, "I bumped my forehead against an iron trunk, and the bump stayed for something like twenty-five years. A painter who did my portrait would touch it and say 'Perhaps all your talent is in this bump.' When I was five-and-a-half years old I improvised a little piece and played it several times. It was in F-major minus the B-flat, which should not, however, be interpreted as a predilection for the Lydian mode, but should rather be ascribed to the fear of touching a black key! It is difficult to imagine a more preposterous title than the one I assigned to this creation: *The Hindu Galop*. At that time there was a famine in India, and my parents read about it in the papers and discussed it while I listened."

Prokofiev's interest in music was tremendously stimulated when at the age of seven his parents took him to Moscow to see *Faust* and *Prince Igor*. The little lad had never been inside an opera house before and he was ecstatically thrilled by the fine orchestra, the singing, colour, and wonder of it all. He went home deeply impressed by the splendour and with the music reverberating in his mind. No longer would he spend his time in writing marches and waltzes. There was only one thing to do:

to set to work on an opera of his own! For nearly two years *The Giant*, as he called it, was taking shape. Eventually, this ambitious work was completed—in three acts and six scenes, we are told—and during a visit to his uncle's house he persuaded his cousins to help him in the production of it. So on a warm evening in June 1900, his uncle's workpeople found themselves called in to sit with the family and witness Prokofiev's first opera—with piano accompaniment.

Then he started writing another opera, but this time on a much larger scale. It was to be called *On the Desert Island*, but alas! this task proved to be too much for him: he completed the overture and then abandoned the project. However, when he next went to Moscow he took this overture with him and played it to Taneiev, who thought it was very promising, and advised its owner to take lessons in harmony and counterpoint. Prokofiev accordingly went to Reingold Gliere in the summer of 1902 and began his studies.

Within a year he had written a symphony in G for full orchestra. As one would imagine, it was a very boyish affair, but Gliere encouraged him to persevere and during the ensuing twelve months he wrote an opera, complete with an effective overture, based on Pushkin's *Feast during the Plague*.

In 1904, when he was barely thirteen, Prokofiev was introduced to Glazounov who examined his work and recognised real talent in it. The eminent composer was at that time a professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire, and made immediate arrangements for the boy to attend there for lessons. So Prokofiev entered this famous establishment as a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov and Nicolas Tcherepnin for harmony, counterpoint and composition, and he also studied the piano with Anna Nicolaievna Essipova. He stayed there for ten years, and although he was frequently criticized for modernistic tendencies of which the authorities strongly disapproved, he gained diplomas in composition, as a pianist and as a conductor.

When he was seventeen he made his first public appearance at a concert organized by the Contemporary Music Society, and played several of his own compositions for the piano. Of his early works, his *Sinfonietta*, composed in 1909, was particularly sound, and over twenty years later he revised it for publication.

He was still a student when his work attracted the attention of Scriabin, to whom he dedicated one of the symphonic poems he wrote in 1910: *Rêves*. In the following year he completed his

First Piano Concerto which drew a considerable amount of attention to him, for not only did it win him the first prize (a grand piano) when he used it as his graduation piece, but in 1914 it also brought him the Rubinstein Medal. The most satisfactory works at this stage in his career, however, were his piano sonatas.

His Second Piano Concerto was first heard in 1913, when Prokofiev played the solo part personally. Two operas were also completed at about this time: *Undina* and *Magdalena*.

Thus Prokofiev came to be regarded in musical circles as one of the "coming men." This was perhaps due to his understanding of the way modern music was shaping in other countries. Most of his compositions were striking in their dynamic virility, though there were traces of what the critics of to-day call "cold glitter."

It should be recorded here that Prokofiev was greatly encouraged by Vladimir Mayakovsky, the poet, with whom he shared progressive ideas in art generally.

The Great War did not seriously affect his career, because being the only son of a widow, he was exempt from military service. He had by that time completed a mythological ballet which he showed to Diaghilev, but the famous impresario was unable to use it because of its subject, so Prokofiev rearranged the music into a suite for orchestra, calling it *Scythian Suite*. This series of musical pictures of pagan Russia made a great impression upon the critics, and its composer was invited to conduct the first performance of it in St. Petersburg on January 29th 1916. Diaghilev then commissioned him to write a new ballet which he called *Chout*, but this was not performed until 1921, when Diaghilev produced it in Paris.

Prokofiev's greatest wartime achievement was the popular *Classical Symphony*, written in 1917 and first performed in St. Petersburg on April 21st 1918 under his own direction. This work brought him the allegiance of musicians all over the world.

At that time there was a terrible famine in St. Petersburg, so the Russian Commissar for Education helped Prokofiev to leave the country, and making his way through Siberia and Japan he eventually arrived in New York on September 18th 1918. For the next fifteen years most of his time was spent in New York, London or Paris.

Soon after his arrival in America he found many friends among the members of the Russian Symphony Society, and on the following December 10th this body held a concert at which he appeared as soloist in his Second Piano Concerto.

In the following year he wrote another opera *Love of Three Oranges*, which was accepted by the Chicago Opera Company and produced by them in December 1921. Based on the story by Carlo Gozzi, this work drew high praise from Leonid Sabaneyev who described it as "splendid and exceedingly witty," adding: "Prokofiev's opera is full of peculiar theatricalism, but remains musical at the same time. The composer has successfully found the synthesis of stage and music, which has for so long been sought by the theoreticians." The story tells of a prince doomed to seek a cure in laughter, and who discovers a princess in an orange.

Prokofiev never lost touch with his native Russia, and his great admiration for her efforts to establish herself as an industrial nation inspired him to write his ballet *Le Pas d'Acier* (The Steel Stride). This curious attempt on the part of a musician to portray heavy industry, industrial growth and whatnot, was produced in Paris by Diaghilev in the summer of 1927. Meanwhile Koussevitzky was keeping the Parisian audiences well acquainted with Prokofiev's concert works: his Second and *Classical* symphonies were frequently heard, as well as the First Violin Concerto.

In 1934 Prokofiev returned to Russia to become a Soviet citizen, taking with him his *Symphonic Song* which was given its *première* at a concert by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra on April 14th of that year. Curiously enough, the well-known Soviet critic Ostretsov took an instant dislike to it, and declared in *Sovietskaya Muzika* that it revealed the tendencies of "urbanized lyricism." The general effect, he considered, was of "weariness and morbid resignation. The very material of the music is so abstract in idiom that vital and solid form is sometimes reduced to disembodied, half-real, melancholy arabesque. The composer has used his instrumental palette, charged with pallid colours, to create a display of instrumental pictures giving the impression of a gloomy elegiac background against which are heard . . . the melodies of solo instruments and dim complexes of separate instrumental groups. Emotionally, the *Symphonic Song* is an elegy of solitude; its lyrical pathos is the pathos of the social and cultural dereliction of a man disillusioned with the present, unable to defend the past and unable to believe in the future . . ."

Ostretsov then goes on to say: "We do not dispute Prokofiev's right to reflect the emotional world of 'superfluous people' in the West, whose inward desolation imposes its inevitable stamp of rottenness and putrefaction on everything around it. But we do not share the composer's humanistic sympathy with



these persons, a sympathy which gives his work a character not of satire but of intimate, lyrical community of feeling and experience. To reflect aright the anaemic 'superfluous man' of the contemporary West, one must go some distance away from him—the distance of the Soviet witness watching the downfall of a dying class. The composer calls this work a song. Lyricism of the graveyard is the lot of the bourgeois artist . . . The word 'song' is, for the Soviet composer, always connected with the people he sees doing lively, joyous, full-blooded, valuable work in the shops and fields, with people going about their inconspicuous but important and necessary business."

Although his other works were warmly praised, this criticism made Prokofiev realize that in spite of his efforts to keep in touch with events in Russia, he had never understood the new spirit of the people, and therefore his next task was to adjust himself to the Soviet environment in which he intended to work. For a while he lived at Baku, where he wrote his Second Violin Concerto which, curiously enough, was first performed not in Russia but in Madrid in December 1935. In this work we find that he abandoned a lot of the cold "cleverness" that characterized the First Violin Concerto (in D-major), for warm lyrical material pleasing to his fellow countrymen if not quite to the taste of the more sophisticated audiences of Paris.

An interesting sidelight on the effects of his change of style comes from the lawsuit in which he was engaged with Serge Lifar, the ballet dancer, from whom he claimed the balance of thirty thousand francs due for a ballet called *On the Banks of the Boristhenes*. Lifar's defence was based on the grounds that the work was deficient in artistic merit, but Prokofiev won the case because the judge insisted that a work of art could not be judged on the result of a single season of ballet.

His other works during this period include *Petya and the Wolf*, a symphonic fairy tale for children, written for a children's concert given by the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra in May 1936; his *Russian Overture* (Opus 72) first performed in Moscow in October of that year; and the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, in the writing of which, to use his own words, he had "taken special pains to achieve a simplicity which will, I hope, reach the hearts of all listeners. If people find no melody and no emotion in this work of mine, I shall be very sorry; but I feel sure they will sooner or later."

Perhaps the best of his work before the Second World War was

the symphonic cantata *Alexander Nevsky*, which he constructed partly from the music he wrote for the famous Eisenstein-Vasilev film about the overthrow of the Teutonic Knights at the Battle of Lake Peypus in the year 1242. Prokofiev himself tells us that "As the action is laid in the thirteenth century, I was above all interested to know what music was sung by the Catholics at that period. I got hold of a book containing a collection of Catholic chants of various periods, but this music was so strange to me that it was impossible to use it in the film. No doubt the Teutonic Knights, going into battle, sang it with frenzy but to modern ears it would have sounded cold and expressionless. So I was obliged to compose for the Knights music that would sound more apt to contemporary listeners." As a result we have a most remarkable musical picture in the third movement of these mail-clad knights riding into battle, followed by a stirring fourth movement: "Arise, O Russian people, for the glorious battle, the battle for life and death." A few years after the first performance of this outstanding work, the Russian people were again called upon to throw back hordes of invaders . . . *Alexander Nevsky* concludes with a moving lament of a Russian woman on the battlefield at night, and finally Nevsky's triumphant entry into Pskov accompanied by peals of bells and cheering crowds.

Prokofiev spent a fair amount of time in London some seven or eight years ago, and conducted several of his own works at a concert given by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1938. Notable items in the programme were the *Classical Symphony*, Second Violin Concerto in G-minor, and the *Romeo and Juliet* ballet.

In 1940, back in Russia, he composed two more operas, one called *Semyon Kotko*, which tells of the War in the Ukraine, and the other based on Sheridan's famous play *The Duenna*. These were followed by *A Monastery Wedding* in 1941.

His famous ballet *Cinderella* was written at the request of the Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet in Leningrad. He had completed the draft of two acts when the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, and all the Soviet composers placed their services at the disposal of their country. The wise authorities required him not to seize a rifle, but to use his genius to sustain the people in their great trial. One of his first "war works" was the symphonic suite *Year 1941*, "dedicated to the struggle against the fascist invaders." It consists of three parts: "In battle," "At Night," and "We are fighting for the Brotherhood of People." Prokofiev says "In the first part I tried to give the listener the

alternating impression of being on the field of battle and then receding from it. In the second part I wanted to give the poetry of night, the quiet that precedes the storm of approaching battle. The third part is a lyrical hymn to the fraternity of peoples."

His next task was to start work on the opera *War and Peace* based on Tolstoy's famous novel. "The most difficult task" Prokofiev declares,<sup>1</sup> "was to shape the opera so as to convey to the listener the principal idea and central events of this work in one evening's performance. But as the material kept piling up, it became clear that the novel could not be squeezed into one performance, and I therefore decided to begin the opera with events close to 1812. The opera consists of five acts and eleven scenes. In the first six scenes I strove to show the love, excitement, joy and suffering of Natasha Rostova, Andrei Bolkonsky, Pierre Bezuhov, Anatole Kuragin, their characters and relations—all that Tolstoy described as the knot of the novel."

"When Napoleon's invasion disturbs the peaceful life of the people," Prokofiev continues, "their fate becomes closely intertwined with the fate of their country. The Russian people—peasants, troops, Cossacks, guerillas—rise to the defence of their native land. To this I dedicated the remaining five scenes of the opera, in which we meet Kutuzov, the favourite of the army and of the people, the peasant Tikhon Shcherbaty, who became a guerilla, the elder's wife Vasilisa, who destroyed many enemies, and Vasili Denisov, the guerilla detachment commander. The opera concludes with the scene of the routed French army retreating along the Smolensk highway, in bitter blizzards, and with the proclamation of Field-Marshal Kutuzov to the Russian troops, the guerillas and the people: 'Russia will not forget you! Glory to the Russian people!' When I wrote these scenes I recalled the words of Tolstoy: 'To produce a good work of art one must come to love its principal idea. In *War and Peace* I loved the thoughts of the people.'"

The libretto of the opera was adapted with the assistance of Mira Mendelsohn. "We did our best to preserve the spirit of Tolstoy's work and his language" Prokofiev declares. "Wherever there was a lack of dialogue in Tolstoy's novel, we drew on the author's text. In addition we used the 1812 diary of the guerilla poet Denis Davydov, and songs composed by the people during the war of 1812. In addition to arias and duets, choirs occupy an important place in the opera."

Prokofiev then wrote a cantata for soprano, tenor, chorus and

<sup>1</sup> Information conveyed by the Soviet News Service.

full symphony orchestra entitled *The Ballad of the Unidentified Boy*, based on the poem by Paul Antokolsky, which relates a true story. In a communication from Moscow, Prokofiev tells us "The central character is a Soviet boy whose mother and sister are killed and whose home is ruined by the invading Nazis. Orphaned and homeless, the boy flees from his native town, but when the Germans retreat, he returns, and seeing an automobile carrying a number of German generals, throws a grenade into it. The car is blown sky high. Neither the boy's name nor whether he remained alive is known, but the story about the daring youngster spread all over the country. I strove to achieve the closest co-ordination between the development of the music and the dramatic text, and to make the cantata passionate and dramatic."

In the summer of 1943, Prokofiev wrote a symphonic suite consisting of eight parts based on his opera *Semyon Kotko*, which was adapted from Valentine Katayev's novel *I, the Son of the Working People*. In a statement referring to this suite, Prokofiev explained "I chose those parts of the opera which seemed most suitable, so far as the music is concerned, and especially those which correspond to the present struggle against the Germans. The suite tells of the peaceful life in a Ukrainian village, its work, merry songs and beautiful orchards where lovers met on mild southern nights. The German invaders come, looting and making savage reprisals against the civil population. The village is fired, there are the grim executions, and the guerillas bury their heroes. The last part 'Ours Have Come Back' shows the village once again restored to freedom and happiness."

The music of Prokofiev has always been in great demand for the Russian films. His more recent successes in the film world have been in such productions as *Kotovsky*, *Guerillas in the Steppes of the Ukraine*, and *Lermontov*. As this sketch is being written he is completing the music for the great film being produced in two parts by Sergei Eisenstein *Ivan the Terrible*.

During a recent visit to Nalchik, in the Northern Caucasus, he composed a quartet based on Kabardino-Balkarian themes. The combination of fresh, striking and undeveloped musical material with the austere classical form of the string quartet produced most interesting results, and this work was given a warm reception by the inhabitants of Kabardino-Balkaria, for they had no difficulty in recognizing familiar tunes in it.

His Sixth Piano Sonata was given its first English performance by Louis Kentner in December 1943, and the Seventh, in three

movements, won him the Stalin prize. He then wrote a sonata in four parts for flute and piano in which he adhered to the simple and clear forms of classical music.

When Prokofiev decided to return to Russia and become a Soviet citizen he was warned that life under the Soviet regime would have a detrimental effect upon his work. The success with which he has adapted himself to the new social order of his native land, and the excellence of much of his recent music, might well be used as an argument against those who insist that the Soviet Government is crippling the development of musical art by its patronage.

# Arnold Schönberg



FOR the past twenty or thirty years Arnold Schönberg has been one of the most powerful figures in modern music. A great revolutionary, he has always marked out his own individual course; yet he claims to have done no more than continue the line of classical music in its natural course of evolution. He is considered by many to be the leader of the expressionist school of thought in music.

He was born in Vienna on September 13th 1874 of Jewish parents. As a schoolboy he showed exceptional ability in music: he learnt first the violin, then the 'cello, and soon persuaded three of his schoolfellows to form a string quartet. The composition of duets, trios and quartets for stringed instruments seemed to present no difficulties to him, and the performance of them added considerably to the pleasure of the four young amateurs whenever they made music together.

When Schönberg reached the age of sixteen his father died, and financial difficulties made it imperative that he should earn his own living forthwith. This he did, but he applied himself to music with even greater ardour in his leisure time, although the prospect of making it his profession seemed very remote in those difficult days. Unable to pay for lessons, he continued to teach himself until one day a friend happened to pick up a string quartet which he was writing, and was so impressed by it that he took it to Alexander von Zemlinsky, who at that time was one of the most promising of the elder students at the Vienna Conservatoire.

Zemlinsky was about two years older than Schönberg, and having studied composition for many years was quite capable of recognizing the value of the latter's work. He immediately offered to teach the young composer all that he knew in technical matters. They worked together for years; Schönberg repaying his friend's kindness by doing various odd jobs for him and by playing the 'cello in the orchestra that Zemlinsky was conducting.

In 1897 he made a piano arrangement of Zemlinsky's opera *Sarema*, and shortly afterwards composed a string quartet which drew considerable attention to him when it was given its first

public performance in Vienna. Then Eduard Gärtner began singing some of Schönberg's songs in public, and that was when the trouble started, for Vienna in those days was not prepared for this young man's advanced ideas in music. In many circles, Schönberg and his work were regarded with undisguised hostility, and when his sextet for strings *Verklärte Nacht* followed shortly afterwards it did nothing to improve his relations with the more reactionary school of thought.

By this time he had succeeded in supporting himself by musical activities—chiefly the orchestration of light music for other composers—and the small but fairly steady income he obtained in this manner enabled him to marry Zemlinsky's sister Mathilde in 1901. In March of that year he completed his *Gurre-Lieder*, a huge work for solo voices, orator, chorus and orchestra, but owing to many delays in its orchestration, it was not performed until Franz Schreker directed it in Vienna in 1913.

Soon after his marriage, Schönberg moved with his wife to Berlin, where he worked as director of music in a theatre until Richard Strauss used his influence to secure for him a teaching appointment on the staff of the Stern Conservatoire. It was at this stage in his career that he wrote his symphonic poem *Pelleas und Melisande*, which was first performed at a concert arranged by the Society of Creative Musicians in Vienna under his own direction. Criticizing the performance in *Die Signale* Ludwig Karpach wrote: "Schönberg's *opus* is not merely filled with wrong notes in the sense in which Strauss's *Don Quixote* is, but is itself a fifty-minute-long protracted wrong note. This is to be taken literally. What else may hide behind this cacophony is impossible to ascertain."

In 1903 Schönberg returned to Vienna, and sharing a house with Zemlinsky, began teaching. There was still plenty of hostility towards his ideas in music, but many of the younger composers and students could see his objective, and regarded him as a far more stimulating teacher than many of the academicians. Some of the more distinguished musicians, too, began to regard him as a pioneer to be followed with interest, and it is significant that soon after he had taken up residence again in Vienna, he was approached during a rehearsal by Gustav Mahler who expressed great interest in the somewhat unusual course he was steering in music. From that time, Mahler gave him every encouragement, and the support of this eminent Viennese composer was particularly valuable in the ensuing years when Schönberg was offering his more mature compositions to a hard and unsympathetic world.

His difficulties seemed to increase as the years rolled on. In 1907, for instance, the Arnold Rosé Quartet attempted to play his Quartet in D-minor at a public concert, but the audience became abusive and "drowned" the players with hisses. After this fiasco, Schönberg decided that the general public had not advanced sufficiently in music to hear his works, and for the next few years most of his compositions were performed privately in select circles where there was a demand for experimental work.

During the first decade of the present century his interest in modern art induced him to take up painting, and he produced several pictures which were later exhibited in Vienna. I know little of Schönberg's work as an artist, and apart from recording that it is expressionist in character, like his music, I can add nothing to those bare facts.

In the autumn of 1911 he again moved to Berlin in search of a more sympathetic musical public, and while he was in the German capital he completed a treatise on harmony and counterpoint and composed, among other items, his cycle *Pierrot Lunaire*, which again brought him little else but ridicule when it was performed in Vienna, and some hearty abuse from the German critics when it was heard at the Choralionsaal in Berlin. Otto Taubmann writing in the *Boersen Courier* said: "If this is the music of the future, then I pray my Creator not to let me live to hear it again." The Berlin correspondent of the *Musical Courier* describing the performance as "the last word in cacophony and musical anarchy" tells us that "Albertine Zehme, a well-known Berlin actress, dressed in a pierrot costume, recited the *Three Times Seven* poems while a musical, or rather unmusical ensemble consisting of a piano, violin, viola, 'cello, piccolo and clarinet, stationed behind a black screen and invisible to the audience, discoursed the most ear-splitting combination of tones that ever desecrated the walls of a Berlin music hall."

A marked change in the general attitude towards Schönberg's work occurred in Vienna in February 1913, when a performance of his complete *Gurre-Lieder* was hailed as a great success.

Sir Henry Wood conducted the first English performance of his *Five Pieces for Orchestra* on September 3rd 1912. Here is an extract from Ernest Newman's report in the *Nation*: "It is not often that an English audience hisses the music it does not like; but a good third of the people at Queen's Hall the other day permitted themselves that luxury after the performance of the five orchestral pieces of Schönberg. Another third of the audience



was not hissing because it was laughing, and the remaining third seemed too puzzled either to laugh or to hiss. May it not be that the new composer sees a logic in certain tonal relations that to the rest of us seem chaos at present, but the coherence of which may be clear enough to us all someday?"

The *Manchester Guardian* commented: "It is impossible to give an idea of the music. The endless discords, the constant succession of unnatural sounds from the extreme notes of every instrument, and the complete absence of any kind of idea, which, at one hearing at least, one can get hold of, baffle description."

Turning to the *Daily News* we find: "We must be content with the composer's own assertion that he has depicted his own experiences, for which he has our heartfelt sympathy."

Despite this cold reception, Sir Henry Wood invited Schönberg to come to London personally to conduct a second performance which took place in February 1914. This time the orchestral pieces found favour with a small minority, but most of the critics remained caustic. One, indeed, declared that the pieces were so ridiculous in their chaotic formlessness that members of the orchestra were laughing down their instruments instead of blowing them.

Soon after the outbreak of the Great War, Schönberg was called up for military service, but as he was then over forty years of age, he was permitted to do garrison duty in Vienna. He was released from this obligation in 1917 and in the following year founded and directed a society to promote the private performance of contemporary music, advanced or otherwise.

Schönberg's first wife, Mathilde, did not live to see her husband's genius recognized: she died in 1923, and it was not until he reached his fiftieth birthday in 1924 that Vienna fêted him with a celebration in the Town Hall, the chorus of the State Opera taking part. An address was read by the Bürgermeister. For all that, when Schönberg was offered a professorship, this honour came not from the Vienna Academy but from the Academy of Fine Arts at Berlin. This position he held until the end of May 1933, when the Nazi Minister for Education ignominiously dismissed him because of his Jewish ancestry. He then went to America, taking with him his second wife, Gertrud Kolisch, sister of Rudolf Kolisch, the eminent violinist. The Nazis afterwards held his music up to ridicule as "degenerate art."

Schönberg has remained in the United States ever since. His first appointment there was on the staff of the Malkin School of

Music at Boston, but in 1936 he became Professor of Music in the University of California at Los Angeles, a position which he still holds at the time of writing. His first appearance as a conductor in America after he took up permanent residence there was in March 1934 when he directed a performance of his own *Pelleas und Melisande* by the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Schönberg's music is all composed upon a system of his own based on the twelve-tone scale, which, to put it bluntly, knocks the bottom out of all the conventional rules of harmony, yet we are assured by no less an authority than Erwin Stein that Schönberg's theory is as good a formula for composition as any of the systems used in the past.

His works include the *Variations for Orchestra* (1928) which were first performed by Dr. Furtwaengler in Berlin in the year of their composition. They appear to have caused a *mêlée* in the audience for Max Marschalk reported in *Die Vossische Zeitung*: "The majority of the audience were silent, but two excited minorities engaged in combat. The give and take of remarks for and against the piece grew to greater dimensions and took more unfortunate forms than we have ever experienced at a Schönberg *première*. And we are accustomed to almost anything."

Among his later compositions we find: *Music to a scene in a moving picture* (1930), Suite for String Orchestra (1935), Suite for Piano (1934), String Quartet No. 4 (1936), Violin Concerto (1936), Second Chamber Symphony (1940) and an *Ode to Napoleon* (after Byron) for *sprechstimme*, piano and strings, which was written just recently.

Roger Sessions tells us<sup>1</sup> that "the *Ode to Napoleon*, though still in the twelve-tone system, is superficially more 'consonant' than many of Schönberg's earlier works in that, to a very large extent, its style is characterized by the superimposition of triads and their derivatives. It is however doubtful if . . . the *Ode* . . . will prove comforting to those who pretend to see any reversal on Schönberg's part." Continuing his treatise on the technique of Schönberg's later compositions, Sessions declares: "One cannot too often insist that in music it is the composer's inner world of tone and rhythm which matters, and that whatever technical means he chooses in order to give it structure and coherence are subject to no *a priori* judgment whatever. The essential is that structure and coherence be present; and the demand which art makes on its creator is simply that his technique be sufficiently mastered to become an obedient and flexible instrument in his

<sup>1</sup> *Tempo* No. 9, 1944, quoted by kind permission of Boosey & Hawkes, Ltd.

hands. True, the twelve-tone technique became at one time a fighting slogan; this happened under the stress of combat, the inevitable result of bitter opposition met by Schönberg and his disciples. To-day however it is no longer invoked as a universal principle; it is recognized for what it is as a mode of technical procedure, a principle which evolves and becomes modified by practice. Once more—the significance of music springs solely from the composer's imagination and not from ideas about technique. The latter are merely tools which he forges for himself, for his own purposes. They gain what validity they possess from the results, in music, to which they make their imponderable contribution."

Sessions emphasizes that the twelve-tone technique is a part of the *process* rather than an element of the form, and adds that it is not necessary for the listener to understand it to appreciate Schönberg's music. The listener, he insists, "must listen to Schönberg's music in exactly the same spirit as he listens to any music whatever, and bring to it the same kind of response. If he is fortunate he will from the first discover moments of profound and intense beauty which will tempt him further. He will always find that the music makes the utmost demands upon his ear and his musical understanding, and he will probably find that with a little familiarity it begins to impose itself. In any case, esoteric notions or strained efforts will, as in the case of all music, serve as a barrier rather than as an aid to understanding."

Arnold Schönberg is rather short and slight in build: a quiet, unassuming person with no suggestion of eccentricity. He has unbounded admiration for the works of J. S. Bach, and as a teacher, insists that his pupils take a thorough course of instruction in harmony and counterpoint. I mention this because there is a popular notion that all the modern composers have such contempt for the "grammar" of music that they never bother to learn it. This is of course quite incorrect: the majority feel that they *must* know the rules so that they can break them!

"Musical experience, and development through experience, is Schönberg's watchword as a teacher" Sessions tells us. "His pupils speak of his boundless love for music—the energy of his enthusiasm for a classic work as he analyses it in his classes, or of the demands on which he insists in its performance by them. They speak of his tireless energy in asking of them—above all, the gifted ones—that they bring into their work the last degree of resourcefulness of which they are capable. It is not surprising

that under such instruction they learn to make the greatest demands on themselves, or that their love of music and sense for music is developed both in depth and intensity as a result. It is this which distinguishes Schönberg's pupils above all: their training is not merely in 'craftsmanship' but an integral training of their *musicality*, of ear and of response. The conceptions which they have gained are rounded and definite; they have not only gained tools of composition, but have developed also their own individual sense of the purposes for which these tools are to be used."

Finally, for those who, because they are unable to appreciate Schönberg's work, feel doubtful about its value to the art of music, let me conclude with another short quotation from Roger Sessions's excellent treatise: ". . . one fact must be emphasized above all: that no younger composer writes quite the same music as he would have written had Schönberg's music not existed. The influence of an artist is not, even during his life time, confined to his disciples or even to those who have felt the direct impact of his work. It is filtered through to the humblest participant, first in the work of other original artists who have absorbed and re-interpreted it for their own purposes; then through the work of hundreds of lesser individuals, who unconsciously reflect the new tendencies even when they are opposed to them. For genuinely new ideas determine the battle grounds on which their opponents are forced to attack. In the very process of combat the latter undergo decisive experiences which help to carry the new ideas forward."

# Dmitri Shostakovich



THE most popular composer in the Soviet Union to-day, Dmitri Shostakovich, was born in St. Petersburg in 1906. He showed great interest in music as soon as he could walk, and when his mother, a fine pianist, taught him to play the piano, it was evident that he possessed exceptional talent. His precocity was amazing: he seemed to understand the technique of music instinctively, and when he was only thirteen he completed a surprisingly well constructed Scherzo for orchestra. He was only a lad when Leonid Sabaneyev described him as "an extremely talented musician . . . pledged to independence and originality." During his boyhood he was influenced considerably by the works of Glazounov.

He entered the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Conservatoire in 1919 and studied the piano under Leonid Nikolaiev, harmony and counterpoint with Sokolov and composition under Maximilian Steinberg. He composed his First Symphony when he was only nineteen, using it to gain his diploma, and it was publicly performed for the first time on May 12th, 1926 in the Great Hall of the Leningrad Conservatoire. This symphony amazed the world: music critics in every country spoke of the nineteen-year-old Russian genius, and within twelve months this strikingly original work was being played by most of the leading symphony orchestras. It is written in neo-academic style, and has the orthodox four movements, but the gaiety of its melody and rhythm is decidedly refreshing, and despite a tendency towards sentimentality here and there, the more meditative passages are most moving.

When he left the Conservatoire, Shostakovich came under the influence of the works of the more advanced Western composers, such as Schönberg, Hindemith and Stravinsky, and he tended towards "formalism," though he tells us personally that when he left the Conservatoire he "suddenly realized that music is not only a combination of sounds arranged in this melody or that, but an art which is capable of expressing the most varied ideas and feelings by means of its specific qualities. I did not easily win through to this conviction. It is sufficient to say that during the whole of 1926 I did not write a single note."

His Second Symphony, played in the first instance by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra in November 1927, is generally referred to in Russia as the *October Symphony*, for it was written to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. It concludes with a choral setting of a Soviet poem in praise of Lenin and the Revolution, and uses a factory whistle to add a dash of realism. In every way it is inferior to his First Symphony.

Then followed an opera *The Nose*, based on Gogol's tale of a man who was sitting in a barber's chair when his nose became detached and proceeded to live an independent life of its own as a minor government official! The opera is quite amusing but is of no great value as a work of art. The part of the Nose, by the way, has to be sung in a nasal tone which generally necessitates the closing of the singer's nostrils. It was first heard in Leningrad on January 13th 1930.

By that time, his Third Symphony, *The First of May*, was complete. It is written in one long movement, and has a choral finale something on the lines of the Beethoven Ninth, but the Russian spring seems to have inspired Shostakovich to indulge in trombone solos and duets of trumpet and horn which suggests that a Russian's thoughts turn to something rather less pleasant than love at this time of the year. Personally, I prefer Delius's *Cuckoo*, however unfashionable it may be with my more sophisticated friends at the moment.

At about this time, the Soviet Government began to tighten its control upon Russia's creative artists, and in return for handsome remuneration insisted that all art must be for the masses and not for the sophisticated minority. Therefore, any musician who flirted with formalism or whose work showed signs of what Hitler's *Kultur* merchants called degeneration, was in danger of incurring official displeasure. Shostakovich evidently considered his own work to be incapable of giving offence, and little realized that there was trouble ahead. The successful First Symphony was still winning laurels for him, in fact when the United States recognized the Soviet Government on November 18th 1933, Stokowski and the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra celebrated the occasion by making a gramophone record of this remarkable work.

In January 1934, the State Musical Theatre in Moscow produced Shostakovich's grand opera in four acts and nine scenes *Lady Macbeth of the Mzensk District*. The composer himself said of this: "I have tried to make the musical language of the

opera as simple as possible. I cannot agree with the theories once current here that the vocal line should be nothing more than speech with accentuated intonations. Opera is, above all, a vocal work. All vocal parts in my opera are built on broad cantilena, making use of all the resources of the human voice, the richest of musical instruments. The musical development follows a symphonic plan in continuous flow, with interruptions only at the end of each part. The musical interludes between the scenes serve as a continuation and development of the musical idea, and illustrate the events of the drama."

The opera was later renamed *Katerina Ismailova*. Describing it, Ostretsov tells us: "Shostakovich shows himself as a ruthless satirist, ridiculing the cruelty of the merchant class, the stupidity of the Russian priests, the coarse soldiers, covetous bourgeoisie, corrupted lackeys and noblemen . . . He takes military marches, church music, ritual motives, and builds musical characterization on the material . . . Thus the scene at the police headquarters is treated with a deafening march by which the composer depicts the middle-class and the police. Under the mask of this stupid, showy music, the animal image of the repellent Russian bourgeoisie is exposed to light."

This opera was produced shortly afterwards at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, under the auspices of the League of Composers, with Rodzinski conducting. The *New York Times* reported that it was attended by "one of the most distinguished audiences of the season. Leaders of society, business, finance, music and the arts were in attendance. Among those present were Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Junior, Arturo Toscanini, Leopold Stokowski . . . A line of standees stretched from the box office down Broadway twenty minutes before the curtain went up. Considering the snow and cold, this offered a telling example of public interest in the production . . ."

The American production was on a much more elaborate scale than the original in Moscow, and incidently, it provided New York with its choicest bit of scandal of the season. In one scene the lovers retire behind the curtains of the bedroom while the orchestra plays an interlude in which there are rather suggestive *glissando* passages on the trombones. On this particular occasion, the instrumentalists excelled themselves in producing sounds that in the opinion of many were decidedly vulgar, and a large number of the ladies in the audience were profoundly shocked. One American journalist remarked that it sounded as if the poor lady's clothes

were being torn off ; others put an even more indelicate interpretation upon the sounds.

The tremendous success of this opera once again put the name of Shostakovich on the lips of musicians all over the world. Communists in every country spoke of him almost with bated breath, and it certainly looked as if the young composer had established himself for all time. Then the blow fell. On January 28th 1936 *Pravda* published an officially-inspired article entitled "Mess instead of Music" violently attacking *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.

"Officious music critics" it said "exalt this opera to the high heavens and spread its fame far and wide. The listener is from the very first moment bewildered by a stream of deliberately discordant sounds. Fragments of melody and the beginnings of musical phrases appear on the surface, are drowned, then emerge again to disappear once more in noise. To follow this 'music' is difficult : to get anything out of it, impossible.

"On the stage, singing is replaced by screaming. If the composer happens to chance upon a simple, comprehensible melody, he . . . plunges it into the jungle of musical confusion, at times reaching complete cacophony. Expressiveness, required by the listeners, is replaced by frenzied rhythm. Noise expresses passion . . . All this is not because the composer has no talent ; nor because of his inability to express simple and strong feeling in music. This music is deliberately turned inside out so that it has nothing in common with classical operatic music, with plain musical speech."

The article continued : "This music, which is based on the principle of negation of opera, similar to that governing leftist<sup>1</sup> art which denies simplicity in the theatre, denies realism, comprehensible imagery and natural musical speech . . . It is a leftist mess instead of human music. The stirring quality of good music is sacrificed in favour of petty-bourgeois formalist cerebration, with pretence of originality by means of cheap clowning. This is a practice which might end very badly . . .

"Leftist monstrosities in the opera have their origin in the same source as leftist monstrosities in art, poetry, pedagogy and science. The petty-bourgeois 'innovations' lead to its severance from true art, from true science, from true literature . . . The stage serves us, in Shostakovich's production, the coarsest kind of naturalism. Landlords and people are painted uniformly in their most beastly aspect. The predatory merchant woman, through

<sup>1</sup> Strangely enough, "leftist" is used in Soviet Russia as an expression of contempt!



murder having come into wealth and power, is represented as a 'victim' of the bourgeois system. Leskov's story is given a meaning that it does not possess . . . it has been made crude, primitive, and vulgar. The music quacks, grunts, growls and suffocates itself in order to express the amatory scenes as naturalistically as possible. 'Love' is smeared all over the opera in the most vulgar manner. The merchant's bed occupies the central position on the stage. On it, all 'problems' are solved. In the same naturalistic and coarse manner are presented the poisoning and the whipping.

"The composer, apparently, has not set himself the task of discovering the musical desires and expectations of the Soviet public. He scrambles sounds to make them interesting to formalist-aesthetes, who have lost all healthy taste . . . Some critics call this glorification of merchant lust a satire. But there is no satire here. The author strives to attract the public by the coarse and vulgar passions and deeds of the merchant woman *Katerina Ismailova*, using the entire resources of musical and dramatic expression.

"*Lady Macbeth* enjoys great success with the bourgeois audiences abroad. Does not the fact that this opera is messy and absolutely devoid of political connotations contribute to this success among the bourgeoisie? Does it not tickle the perverted tastes of the bourgeoisie audience with its fidgeting, screaming, neurasthenic music?"

Apart from a few banalities, this opera is quite a work of art, and scarcely warrants such a denunciation. Here and there we find some very beautiful writing, and its characterizations are excellent. Shortly afterwards, the same paper attacked Shostakovich's ballet *The Clear Stream*. The action takes place on a collective farm in the Kuban, but *Pravda* pointed out tersely that the dances in it were nothing like the folk-dances of the Kuban, nor even of anywhere in the Soviet Union. "The composer has adopted the same contemptuous attitude to the folksongs of the Kuban as the librettists and choreographers have done to its folk-dances. Therefore, the music is without character . . . it expresses nothing."

These denunciations were bound to damp the young composer's spirits, and when his Fourth Symphony was rehearsed shortly afterwards, he withdrew it and cancelled its performance. In an article in *Sovietskaya Muzika* Georgei Khubov said that Shostakovich had taken these criticisms to heart, believing them

to be just, and was working with great intensity to overcome his "formalistic errors."

When his Fifth Symphony was published, Shostakovich described it as "A Soviet artist's practical and creative reply to just criticism," and explained in *Vechernyaya Moskva* that the symphony was autobiographical, that its theme was the "stabilization of his personality" depicting all his experiences, and that the finale resolves them into a spirit of optimism and the joy of living. After its first performance, Alexei Tolstoy writing in *Izvestia* said that "the sense of joy and happiness that bubbled in the orchestra was carried into the hall like a spring breeze."

This symphony was played in America by the NBC Orchestra under Rodzinski on April 9th 1938, and was an instantaneous success, but in Paris it made a poor impression. A sound film of it, as played by the State Orchestra of the U.S.S.R. under Mravinsky, was brought to London in November 1939 by the "Society for Cultural Relations between the Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the U.S.S.R." Even allowing for poor reproduction, it is surprising to read the verdict of a representative of the *Musical Times*, who far from feeling a sense of joy and happiness "bubbling in the orchestra" reported that it expressed little of the joy of life as lived in a workers' paradise. "Its emotional atmosphere is overcast; spiritually, it exists in a dim cavern full of looming shapes. So there is still something to be explained in connection with this work of high and heavy brow . . ."

When the score of this symphony arrived in Britain, a performance was given at the Queen's Hall under Alan Bush. I suppose I ought to record the criticism of the same journal on this occasion (April 13th 1940): "A great deal of the interest of the music lies in its precise and selective orchestral writing, the significance of which was only half realized in the toned-down colours and weak differentiation of the recorded sounds . . . Shostakovich is a rare master of notes. The gain in lucidity made it still more apparent that the symphony is not a major work. It is personal; it seeks its own way, but it does not open up a world of its own, as other people's fifth symphonies have done . . . We are told that it represents a descent from the highbrow perch towards the proletarian audience; but it doesn't sound like that in the least."

Shostakovich tried to convey the mood of spring, joy and youth in his Sixth Symphony, which was completed in 1939 and first heard in England when it was played by the London Phil-

harmonic Orchestra under Anatole Fistoulari on October 24th 1943. On this occasion the *Musical Times* said: "In this work Shostakovich seems to have guarded against unconscionable length by omitting the first movement altogether. He starts with a grave slow movement which is followed in the usual way by the scherzo and a concluding rondo. The symphony shows him once more a master of orchestral colour. Some of the blends are his own and distinctly effective."

His Piano Quintet written in 1940 brought Shostakovich the Stalin Prize of a hundred thousand roubles. It is undoubtedly one of his finest works and richly deserved this official reward made by the Soviet Government.

Then the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, and events led swiftly to the siege of Leningrad, where Shostakovich was still living. He was called upon to assist in the defence of his native city, and in the midst of the battle made a stirring broadcast to Soviet musicians all over the Union in which he proclaimed: "I am talking to you from the city of Leningrad at a moment when battle is raging at its gates, and the sky is filled with the roar of our 'planes. I am talking to you from the front. I have just completed the score of the second part of my new big symphonic work. If I can write it well, and can complete the third and fourth parts in time, then we can call it the Seventh Symphony.

"Why am I telling you this? I am telling you this, comrades, so that you may know that the dangers now threatening Leningrad have not interrupted the life of the city, and that the cultural workers of Leningrad are doing their duty like all other Leningrad citizens. Soviet musicians!—my dear and many professional comrades-in-arms, my friends, remember that our lives and our country are faced with great danger. This danger is Hitler. We shall defend our country, our lives, our music. We shall work all the harder. Music, which is so dear to us, and in the composition of which we give the best that is in us, must develop and perfect itself as earnestly as ever. We must remember that every note that comes from us is a contribution to our powerful cultural construction; and the better and more sincere our art, the greater will be our faith and our will to win."

Shostakovich continued to compose during lulls between the battles, and eventually he completed the symphony, calling it the *Leningrad Symphony* and dedicating it "To the ordinary Soviet citizens who have become the heroes of the present war." In this "patriotic call to arms," as it has been called, the composer has

tried to portray his country's gigantic struggle against the relentless Nazi hordes. It was first played at Kuibishev on March 1st 1942 and was such a tremendous success that the score was micro-filmed and negatives were flown to both Britain and America. Unfortunately, so much hysterical publicity had been given to this symphony by certain irresponsible journalists in search of a "story" that the more discriminating audiences were rather disappointed when they heard it, and others praised it out of all proportion to its merit. In America, especially, the newspapermen had whipped up such a sensation that millions of people incapable of appreciating a simple tune flocked into the concert halls expecting to hear something miraculous.

The *Leningrad Symphony* was to have been performed in England at one of the "London Summer Concerts" in 1942, but the score did not arrive in time, and it was first heard at a Promenade concert on June 29th of that year. Even over here, disappointment in the work was freely expressed, and it was generally described as "commonplace." One can well understand, however, that in Russia it succeeded in stirring the hearts of the people, because it was part of the great and terrible national drama in which they were all involved. Incidentally, it won Shostakovich the Stalin Prize for the second time. David Rabinovich writes "The Seventh Symphony triumphed because it is saturated with one deep penetrating thought: that is, in days of incomparable struggle, in days of unprecedented calamities, the highest purpose of beauty and its devotee, the artist, is to serve in the cause of victory of man over beast, of light over darkness. The composer has expressed his grand philosophical conception in forms so classically defined, and so clear . . . that they reach every person in whom beats a liberty-loving heart."

The extent of public interest in the *Leningrad Symphony* induced the Columbia Broadcasting System of America to pay ten thousand dollars for the privilege of giving the first broadcast in the western hemisphere of his Eighth Symphony. This took place on April 2nd 1944, when it was played by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra under Artur Rodzinski. Shostakovich said of this work: "I can describe the philosophical concept of my new symphony very briefly: Life is beautiful. All that is dark and ignominious will perish. All that is beautiful will triumph." There are five movements, and the first, *Adagio* and *Allegro*, takes nearly half-an-hour to play—almost as long as the other four put together. The second movement, a march

and trio, contains a curious dialogue between the piccolo and bassoon, and the remaining three are played without intermission. David Rabinovich describes the symphony as "An answer of a philosopher, a confirmation of the perpetuation of life, of eternal spring, happiness and childhood,—in defiance of all the evil forces of Hitlerism."

By the time that this book is in print, Shostakovich will probably have completed his Ninth Symphony, which, as I write, he is composing as an expression of victory and of the feelings and thoughts "of millions of Soviet people during the unforgettable days of our offensives at the front. It will express the greatness of our people, and will be a musical interpretation of our triumphs over barbarism."

Shostakovich has of course written a number of minor works which cannot be listed here, and has frequently composed music for the films. The theme song from one of these, *The Encounter*, has now become a great favourite with the Soviet youth movements.

Needless to say, he is extremely loyal to the Soviet Government, and has implicit faith in the regime. "Music is bound to have a political basis: there can be no music without ideology" he declares. "The old composers, whether they knew it or not, were upholding a political theory. Most of them were supporting the rule of the upper classes. Only Beethoven was a forerunner of the revolutionary movement: his letters reveal that he wished to convey new ideas . . . to rouse the people to revolt against their masters."

Shostakovich contends that Wagner, who began as a radical, later became a reactionary, and that his reactionary patriotism impaired his creative powers in later years. Although it is still played, the music of Wagner is not popular in Russia: it is generally regarded as museum stuff to be studied, but not imitated.

Finally, Shostakovich has tremendous faith in the social value of good music. It can lift the hearts of the people in even the most depressing circumstances, it can inspire them to be strong, and to work and plan for the future, as all good Soviet citizens are doing to-day.

# Jean Sibelius



AS I write, this world-famous composer—nearly eighty years of age—is still living in his native Finland. To a nation whose culture is barely a century old, it must be a great inspiration to have in its midst a composer already regarded by some authorities as very nearly the equal of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, and although Finland's unfortunate attitude towards the Allied nations in recent years to some extent strained the friendship which we in this country have always felt towards her writers, composers and artists, the bond was never broken, and we still follow with great interest the progress of her cultural life.

Jean Sibelius was born in the small town of Hämeenlinna (Tavastehus) on December 8th 1865, to parents of good Finnish ancestry. His father, Christian Gustaf Sibelius was a physician in the army, and his mother came of an old family of some standing and with Swedish connections. It is recorded that the names given to Sibelius at his baptism were Johan Julian Christian, but shortly before he reached manhood he took the name of a deceased uncle, Jean Sibelius, who had distinguished himself in nautical circles.

As a boy, Sibelius was unusually sensitive to the beauty of his native land. He loved the wonderful lakes, woods and coast, and even before he began to study music he would spend many hours in writing little tunes inspired by the beauty he saw around him, and in trying to express his feelings by improvisation at the piano. He was educated at the Suomalainen Normaalityö, later called the Hämeen Lyseo, and took a great interest in the classics, mathematics and dramatic art. He ran a little orchestra at the school, which apart from the piano, from which he conducted, consisted of little else but triangles, bells and Jews' harps!

His first piano lessons had begun when he was nine, but six years later he began studying the violin, and was so captivated by the instrument that for many years his greatest ambition was to excel as a solo violinist. ". . . I wanted to be a celebrated violinist at any price. From the time I was fifteen I played my violin for ten years practically from morning till night. I hated

pen and ink, and infinitely preferred an elegant violin bow. My preference for the violin lasted quite long, and it was a very painful awakening when I had to admit that I had begun my training for the exacting career of an eminent performer too late!"<sup>1</sup>

During the summer months, Sibelius would take his fiddle into the woods and spend all day—and sometimes most of the night—trying to express upon his instrument the feelings stirred in him by the strange charm of his arboreal environment. "I loved to take my violin with me on my summer rambles, so that whenever I felt inspiration, I could express it in music. During the summers at Sääksmäki I selected a platform, for preference, consisting of a stone in Kalalahti with an enchanting view across Vanajavesi. There I gave the birds endless concerts. The neighbourhood of Lovisa inspired me quite as much. When sailing I often stood in the bows with my violin and improvised to the sea."<sup>2</sup>

With his brother and sister he formed a trio: his sister Linda played the piano and his brother Christian took the 'cello. They gave many concerts to their friends, performing chiefly the works of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven at first, but in later years including Schubert, Weber and Mendelssohn.

Chiefly because music was looked upon by his relations as a "disreputable" career, he allowed himself to be persuaded to become a law student and went to the University of Helsinki (Helsingfors). At the same time, however, he took a special course in music at the Conservatoire in the same city. Within a year his love of music prevailed, and in 1886 he gave up law to devote the whole of his time to his art. For three years he worked with Martin Wegelius, a fervent disciple of Wagner, although Sibelius himself was not attracted by the Wagnerian school: he preferred Tschaikovsky and Grieg.

Wegelius was twenty years his senior, yet Sibelius became his personal friend and was frequently invited to spend his summer holidays with him at his house on Granholmen, a lovely island in the western archipelago near Helsinki. "Those summers were of extraordinary value to me" Sibelius has acknowledged. "In the afternoons we played sonatas—principally classic ones. I played the violin and Martin . . . the piano part. The day ended in cosy conclave round a tray of cooling drinks."<sup>3</sup>

While he was at Helsinki he met Ferruccio Busoni who could see real genius in a string trio that Sibelius had just written, and proceeded to take great interest in him. They used to meet in a

<sup>1</sup> Karl Ekman: *Jean Sibelius*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

café frequented by Armas Järnefelt (composer of the ever-popular *Praeludium*) and Adolf Paul, and would engage in lively discussion. Busoni's friendship in later years meant much to Sibelius, for he did a great deal to introduce his young friend's music to other nations.

Sibelius concluded his studies at the Conservatoire early in 1889, when his String Suite in A for violin, viola and 'cello and his String Quartet in A-minor were publicly performed and drew high praise from Karl Flodin, the most severe critic in Finland, who exclaimed "I was astonished by the début of this composer."

Towards the close of 1889 Sibelius secured a scholarship and a Government grant of fifteen hundred marks and went to Berlin to study with the strictly orthodox Albert Becker: director of the cathedral choir, member of the senate of the Royal Academy of Arts, and a great favourite at the court of Wilhelm II. Much of the work he did for Becker was a sheer waste of time, but residence in Berlin made it possible to hear plenty of good music, and this played its part in the composer's development in spite of the conventional ideas of his teacher. He remembers hearing Bülow's interpretation of Beethoven, and recalls with amusement the horror with which Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* was first heard by the people of the German capital.

Fearing that Becker would disapprove of it, Sibelius wrote his Quintet in G-minor in secret, and not until it was completed did he mention it to the old pedant. To his surprise, Becker scrutinized it with interest and sympathy, and referred to the *andante* movement with warm approval.

Sibelius then became interested in the Kalevala, the Finnish national epos, in which he could see wonderful opportunities for musical expression, and his brain was full of plans for writing a work based on a subject taken from this vast poem when he returned to Finland in 1890. At home again, his visits to the Järnefelt family increased in their frequency, and any curiosity that might have arisen in the minds of his relations was dispelled that autumn, when he announced his engagement to Aino Järnefelt, the youngest daughter.

With an introduction to Brahms, his next journey took him to Vienna, but on his arrival, the great composer refused to see him, and it was not until some months later that they met quite by accident in the Café Leidinger. Sibelius was a trifle disappointed to find that Brahms was wearing a badly-cut suit and that his beard evidently had not been trimmed for a month!



Hans Richter, the prominent Wagner conductor who afterwards came to England to direct the Hallé Orchestra, received the young northern composer with great kindness, and advised him to embark upon a course of study with Robert Fuchs, an enthusiastic Brahmsian. He did, but his desire to get as varied a training as possible induced him to approach Karl Goldmark as well, with an introduction from Wegelius. Goldmark, a master of orchestration, had not taken pupils for years, because his compositions were in such great demand that he had no time for teaching, but he agreed to take Sibelius, and gave him a fair amount of attention, thus enabling him to develop his "chamber-music style" of orchestration into something on much more elaborate lines. While he was in Vienna, Sibelius began an Octet for strings, flute and clarinet, which later provided the themes for his famous *En Saga*.

Vienna in those days was a "dream city" for any musician. Johann Strauss (ii) was still alive and conducting his immortal waltzes; musicians, artists and writers thronged the streets and cafés, all exultant with the joy of life; every day there was something to explore, a concert or opera to attend, in that lovely and inspiring centre of culture.

Back in Finland in the summer of 1891, Sibelius was caught up in the nationalist zeal that had been provoked by Russian attempts to encroach upon the liberties of the Finnish people, and he associated himself with the circle of intellectuals who had rallied around the newspaper *Päivälehti*, which expressed the feelings of the younger generation. This tended, of course, to increase the national colour in his work.

Early in 1892 he completed his first major work: the symphonic poem in five movements called *Kullervo* employing solo voices, chorus and full orchestra. It was first played to the Finnish people on April 28th, and was given a great ovation. His future as a composer was ensured by that work, so he married Aino Järnefelt on June 10th 1892, and they went to the eastern shore of Lake Pielisjärvi for their honeymoon. In these lovely surroundings they heard "runes" of the Kalevala sung by the peasants, much to the delight of the young composer, for he found that the ancient Finnish folk-melodies closely resembled the themes he had used in *Kullervo*.

Returning to Helsinki in the autumn, he took a teaching appointment at the Academy of Music, and another as an instructor in the Philharmonic Society's orchestral school.

The success of *Kullervo* caused Robert Kajanus to suggest that Sibelius should write a "stock" piece for the repertory of the Philharmonic Society's orchestra, adding that he would like it to be one that would be easily understood by the average concert audience so that it could be used to introduce the new composer to a wider public. This led to the composition of the popular tone-poem *En Saga*, which was completed in 1892. The glittering colours of this brilliant work have now made it a great favourite all over the world.

Another compliment came when the students of Viborg asked him to write the music for a series of historical tableaux that were to be performed in November 1893. These were based on the history of Karelia, and appealed instantly to Sibelius, so in the summer of that year he went to Ruovesi to write his *Karelia* Suite for orchestra, with an overture to go with it, and also his first important piano work, the Sonata in F-major.

The following summer found him visiting Rome, Venice and other Italian towns. He was enchanted by the scenery, and was very appreciative of the warm welcome shown to him by musical folk everywhere he went. Then he proceeded to Bayreuth to meet Armas Järnefelt with whom he had arranged to hear *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. He was not particularly impressed, and observed that the audience showed no sign that they were enjoying the music: they sat solemnly in a lugubrious atmosphere as if they were taking part in a singularly dreary church service. He found far more pleasure in walking through the lovely country nearby. The tour was completed by a month's sojourn at Munich, where he started writing his *Lemminkäinen* Suite.

For the coronation of Nicholas II, he wrote a cantata to be sung in the courtyard of the University. Alas! the trumpeter in the small orchestra assembled for the event celebrated the coronation in his own way at a local tavern, and nobody could succeed in sobering him. In the middle of the fugue the excessively-lubricated gentleman began improvising, and wrecked the entire performance!

The composer's genius had by that time become recognized throughout the country, and people began writing to the papers deploring the fact that so promising an artist should be obliged to do teaching in order to live. In 1897 the Finnish Senate therefore decided that he should be asked to devote himself entirely to composition, and awarded him an annual pension of two thousand marks. This encouraged Sibelius enormously, though he was

unable to relinquish his teaching appointments until the close of the nineteenth century, after which he took only a few private pupils of exceptional talent.

In the spring of 1898 he visited Berlin, anxious to hear the "new music" of several of the progressive European composers. While he was in Germany he went to Leipzig with Adolf Paul in the hope of getting the famous old firm of Breitkopf and Härtel to publish his recently-completed incidental music to Paul's drama *King Christian II*. Sibelius said afterwards<sup>1</sup>: "On arriving at Leipzig we hired a cab and gave the driver Breitkopf and Härtel's address. After a time the cab stopped in front of an enormous building—the offices of the great publishers. We entered and were taken charge of by a hall porter . . . We were led through one large room after another. Everything made a solemn and awe-inspiring impression. Paul seemed to feel very much at home . . . Our progress through the huge rooms had just the opposite effect upon me. My confidence decreased at every step I took, and when at last we came into the holy of holies, the manager's room, where the head of the firm, O. v. Haase, sat enthroned under Beethoven's autographed portrait, I was almost ready to sell my compositions for nothing." It should be noted, however, that Sibelius was able to make a satisfactory agreement with the eminent music publishers.

Later that year Sibelius and his family moved to Mattila Manor at Kervo, and in that pleasant house he completed his First Symphony: an important milestone in his career. This striking revolutionary work, rich in legend and drama, was first heard in Finland on April 26th 1899 with his magnificent choral setting of Viktor Rydberg's *Song of the Athenians*, which stirred the whole nation to resist the domination of Russia. Finland was at that time seething under the Russian yoke, and the great choral song rang out as a clarion call to the people. Freedom of speech was one of the demands of the nation, and when the "Press Celebrations" were held in the following November, Sibelius wrote the music for a series of "Tableaux of the Past." The last of these was eventually called *Finlandia*, the tone-poem that provoked over a thousand speeches and pamphlets in the cause of Finnish independence, and which afterwards became popular all over the world. It was originally played under the title *Suomi*, introduced into Germany as *Vaterland*, and to the Parisian audiences as *La Patrie*. The Russians forbade the performance of this intensely national work in Finland for many years, and when

<sup>1</sup> Karl Ekman: *Jean Sibelius*.

Sibelius conducted it in Reval and Riga in 1904, he was obliged to call it an Impromptu in the programme.

When the orchestra of the Philharmonic Society visited the Paris Exhibition in the course of a tour in 1900, Sibelius went with them and received a great ovation, and the warm welcome given to him in the French capital was in turn taken up by Stockholm, Gothenburg, Oslo, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Berlin, Hamburg, Rotterdam and Brussels. Later in the same year he made with his family another tour of Europe which extended well into 1902. They visited Berlin again, and then went on to Italy to stay at Rapallo. Here, he rented a study in a little villa up in the hills, and surrounded by a lovely garden resplendent with roses, camellias, magnolias, almond trees, cypresses, vines and palms, he wrote his Second Symphony. On the way home in May, he visited Prague and met Joseph Suk and Anton Dvorák. Recalling his conversation with Dvorák in an interview with Ekman,<sup>1</sup> Sibelius said: "The old man was naturalness and modesty personified, and spoke very modestly about his art, not at all as one would have imagined from his position in the musical life of his country. Incidentally, he said quite sincerely 'Wissen Sie, ich habe zuviel komponiert' (Do you know, I have composed too much). I could not agree with him in his opinion."

At the Heidelberg Festival, where he met Richard Strauss, Sibelius was called upon to conduct two of his own works: *The Swan of Tuonela* and *The Return of Lemminkäinen*. Both were received with tremendous enthusiasm.

The Second Symphony was first performed at Helsinki on March 8th 1902 under the composer's own direction. A month later he was conducting the *première* of his cantata *The Origin of Fire* (words from the Kalevala), at the New Finnish Theatre in the same city.

Early in the following year he wrote some incidental music for strings to Arvid Järnefelt's drama *Kuolema*, and afterwards re-scored the waltz in this to include wind instruments. To his great surprise, this casually-written little piece became known later in almost every corner of the globe—*Valse Triste*. The tremendous popularity of this very slight work—the poorest specimen of the music of Sibelius—has unfortunately given a great many people an entirely false impression of the great Finnish composer's ability.

Between 1902 and 1904 Sibelius passed through a restless period, and finally, inability to work in Helsinki made him build

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

a country house near Järvenpää. This pleasant house seemed to solve the problem, for when the family settled there in the autumn of 1904 he started work on his Third Symphony almost immediately.

The next year was significant for the tremendous reception given to his Second Symphony at one of the "Moderne Musik" concerts in Berlin; for Sir Granville Bantock's performance of several of the works of Sibelius in England; for Toscanini's introduction of them into Italy with an orchestra of a hundred and twenty players, and for the first performance of the (revised) Violin Concerto in Berlin under Richard Strauss with Carl Halir as the soloist. But as far as we in Britain are concerned, the greatest event of all was the personal visit of Sibelius to this country and his cordial welcome by Sir Granville Bantock and Sir Henry Wood. "I liked England very much. It was an indescribable joy to me to see ancient culture at every step, based on the respect for the power of traditions which appealed to me very strongly. I immediately discovered the error in the very general impression current at that time that Englishmen have no natural talent for music. On the contrary, they are very capable musicians although in their splendid isolation they do not trouble to advertise themselves."<sup>1</sup>

The Royal Philharmonic Society invited him to come to London again early in 1907 to conduct his Third Symphony, but he was unable to complete it by the time appointed and was therefore obliged to postpone the visit. The *première* of this work was eventually given at Helsinki on September 25th of that year, and it was not heard in England until the following February 20th, when the composer conducted it in London. During his second visit to our country he was able to attend a special reception at Oxford, and was very charmed by the venerable University city which, he said, reminded him in many ways of Venice.

Back in Finland early in 1908, Sibelius was obliged to undergo an operation on his throat. The danger of cancer seriously alarmed all his friends, especially when the Finnish surgeons failed to remove the tumour. The great composer was therefore compelled to consult a specialist in Berlin, who made thirteen operations and then abandoned the task as hopeless. Fortunately, he had a brilliant young assistant who tried his hand and succeeded at the first attempt.

In February and March of 1909 Sibelius was in London again. He met Debussy and Vincent d'Indy, who were also staying here,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

and heard several new compositions by Elgar and Bantock which pleased him immensely. The latter part of that year saw him drinking in the beauty of his native land once more by the shores of Lake Pielisjärvi in the company of his brother-in-law, Eero Järnefelt, the artist, and in this lovely environment he found much of the inspiration that made the remarkably colourful tone-poem *Nightride and Sunrise*.

The Fourth Symphony was taking shape throughout the year 1910 while the political tension between Finland and Russia was increasing, and was not finished until early in the following year. This highly important work, introduced to the people at a concert in Helsinki on April 3rd of that year, revealed a significant change in his style: it was a new venture on really modern lines, full of daring invention. I suppose it was inevitable that this rather unexpected discursion into modernism should displease some of the critics. W. J. Henderson, reviewing it in the *New York Sun*, complained that Sibelius had joined the Futurists. "He is as frankly dissonant as the worst of them. He has swallowed the whole-tone scale, the disjointed sequences, the chord of the minor second, the flattened supertonic and all the Chinese horrors of the forbidden fifths. Yet the new symphony is a noteworthy composition. It has elemental imagination, courage of utterance, and fearlessness of style."

Soon after the appearance of this new symphony, Sibelius received the tempting offer of a professorship at the Vienna Conservatoire, but as much as he loved that city, he said it would be unthinkable to leave Finland and become an Austrian subject. Later in 1912 he was again in England conducting the Fourth Symphony at Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Cheltenham and Bournemouth. To his surprise and delight our audiences received this work with great sympathy and understanding.

After this tour, much of his time was occupied in the composition of the tone-poem *Oceanides* which had been commissioned by Carl Stoeckel, the wealthy American patron of music, for the great Finnish composer's first visit to the New World in May 1914. Just before his departure, the Alexander University of Helsinki conferred upon him an honorary degree of doctor of music.

He arrived in New York on May 27th and was astounded at the reception that awaited him: he had no idea that he had become so famous in the United States. Further proof followed within a month, when shortly after the memorable concert given with the Litchfield County Choral Union at Norfolk, Connecticut,

at which his *Oceanides* was first heard, another degree of doctor of music was conferred upon him by Yale University. President Hadley's speech described him as one of the most distinguished of living composers. "What Wagner did with the Teutonic legend, Dr. Sibelius has done in his own impressible way with the legends of Finland embodied in her national epic. He has translated the Kalevala into the universal language of music, remarkable for its breadth, large simplicity, and the infusion of a deeply poetic personality."<sup>1</sup>

Sibelius was also amazed at the superb musicianship of the American orchestras, the genuine enthusiasm of the audiences and the wonderful hospitality given to him.

The writing of the Fifth Symphony occupied the greater part of 1915, and it was first performed on his fiftieth birthday—celebrated as a national holiday in Finland—by the Helsinki Municipal Orchestra.

The third year of war brought strife even to the quiet countryside in which the home of Sibelius at Järvenpää was situated. The Russian revolution brought in its wake terrible riots among the workpeople and mutiny in the army, then in January 1918, civil war broke out. A month later Sibelius was forbidden to leave his house, and it was searched by soldiers for food and arms. Eventually, the great composer was compelled to move temporarily to Helsinki.

When the danger passed, Sibelius was occupied chiefly with the revision of the Fifth Symphony and the preparation of the Sixth, though he also wrote two large cantatas, *Jordens Sång*, for the inauguration ceremonies at Åbo University, and *Maan Virsi*, completed in 1920. The Sixth Symphony was not finished until 1923.

Another visit to England was made in 1921, when he conducted many performances of his own works in London and the provinces, and then the next important date was February 19th 1923, when the Sixth Symphony was given its initial performance at Helsinki under the composer's direction only a fortnight before the completion of the magnificent Seventh Symphony: a work in one movement consisting of four contrasting sections. This was first played at Stockholm on March 24th of the same year.

Sibelius then undertook the composition of the music for *The Tempest* (Shakespeare) at the request of Det Kongelige Theatre in Copenhagen. This was followed by one of his finest

<sup>1</sup> Reported in *Music Since 1900* by Nicolas Slonimsky (J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.).

works, the symphonic poem *Tapiola*, first heard in New York on December 26th 1926.

His sixtieth birthday—December 8th 1925—was marked by appropriate celebrations throughout Finland, and he was awarded the highest order of the realm and the largest pension ever granted to a private Finnish citizen. Since that time he has lived in semi-retirement, though he has written various minor works, including compositions for the violin and piano, in more recent years. It is said that he has written an Eighth Symphony which he will not allow to be performed until after his death, but of this I know nothing. It might be recorded here that the great Finnish composer was honoured in London in the late autumn of 1938 when Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic Orchestra held a Sibelius Festival consisting of six concerts of his works.

Sibelius has always lived quite a simple life at his home at Järvenpää, and as much as he enjoyed touring in foreign countries and meeting his great contemporaries, he always returned with joy to his unpretentious country house set in a delightful garden well planted with flowers, shrubs and trees.

He has no extreme views in musical matters. His favourite composers are Palestrina, Vittoria, Bach, Rossini, Verdi, Johann Strauss, and above all, Beethoven. He is interested in modern music, but has never been unduly concerned about modernistic tendencies, fashions, and so forth. "When you have lived as long as I, and have seen one tendency after another being born, blossom and die, you are inclined to take up a less decided position. You prefer to search for what is good, wherever you can find it. In doing so you often discover that almost every musical 'school' . . . in some respect or other had something good about it. The surprising thing is that even those periods that have yielded the least direct gain have certainly had their importance. Even mistakes exist in order to widen the horizon and, for instance, with regard to the atonic music of twenty years ago, even that has left something good behind it, at any rate in a technical sense."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Karl Ekman in *Jean Sibelius*.



# Igor Stravinsky



IT is some years since enthusiastic amateurs—and even professionals—came to blows over the works of Igor Stravinsky. During the past decade we have heard music more “advanced” and “cacophonous” than anything Stravinsky ever wrote, and our long-haired red-trousered friends who frequent Charing Cross Road assure us that Stravinsky is now regarded as “tame” by those who matter (*i.e.*, other gentlemen in red corduroy trousers). The truth is, of course, that the ears of the general musical public are getting more accustomed to modern music, and therefore such works as *The Firebird*, *Le Sacre du Printemps* and *Petrouchka* are no longer regarded as offensive monstrosities, but as works of art in which (if nothing else) many refreshingly beautiful colours can be seen by those who try to acquire the necessary degree of perceptiveness.

Stravinsky was named Igor because he was born on St. Igor's day (in the Russian calendar), June 17th 1882. His father was a bass singer in the Imperial Opera, and the family was then living at Oranienbaum, near St. Petersburg.

Although he showed considerable musical ability as a boy, his father decided that he must enter the legal profession, and with that intention he was sent to the University of St. Petersburg. Music therefore became for him a pastime, but he was able to find time to compose a number of works for the piano, and it was these that he showed to Rimsky-Korsakov when at the age of nineteen he met that eminent composer at Heidelberg. Rimsky-Korsakov showed great interest in his work, but pointed out that his sense of harmony had been insufficiently developed, and advised him to work with one of his senior pupils, Kalafati.

In passing, it should be recorded here that on January 11th 1906 Stravinsky married his second cousin, Nadejda Soulima, in St. Petersburg. His progress in music eventually caused Rimsky-Korsakov to advise him to abandon law and to become a musician. After composing his First Symphony in 1907, he became one of Rimsky-Korsakov's personal pupils, and early in the following year, a public performance of the symphony and another work

written at about the same time, *Le Faune et la bergère*, set everybody talking about this revolutionary young composer. His eagerness and unusual ability to experiment in harmony greatly intrigued Rimsky-Korsakov, and they became great friends despite the disparity in their ages.

When Maximilian Steinberg married Rimsky-Korsakov's daughter Sonia in the summer of 1908, Stravinsky produced a symphonic poem called *Fireworks*, which he had written for the occasion, and dedicated to the young couple. Rimsky-Korsakov never heard his pupil's latest effort, because four days later he died, and then Stravinsky was moved to write a work of a very different nature, a memorial called *Chant Funèbre*.

In the following February Serge Diaghilev happened to be at a concert at which Stravinsky's *Scherzo Fantastique* was being performed for the first time. He was immediately impressed by the young composer's genius, and asked him if he would orchestrate two pieces by Chopin for the ballet *Les Sylphides* which the Russian Ballet intended to perform in Paris a month or so later. Stravinsky agreed, and thus became associated with the distinguished impresario, who shortly afterwards commissioned an original work to be based on the Russian fairy-tale *The Firebird*.

Stravinsky was at that time working on his opera *Le Rossignol*, but was so excited at getting this commission that he laid the work aside to attend to Diaghilev's request. He tells us that he worked at such frantic speed that when he finished *The Firebird* on May 18th 1910, he had to go into the country for a rest before proceeding to Paris. The work was dedicated to Rimsky-Korsakov, and in due course Stravinsky arrived in the French capital (for the first time in his life) to be present at Diaghilev's first production of it at the Paris Opéra on June 25th 1910. It was acclaimed by the audience as a masterpiece. "Of course, I do not attribute this success solely to the music; it was equally due to the sumptuous scenery of the painter Golovin, the brilliant interpretation by Diaghilev's dancers and to the talent of the ballet master" Stravinsky says in his *Chronicles of my Life*.

To continue the story in Stravinsky's own words, he then wanted to amuse himself "with an orchestral work in which the piano would play a preponderant rôle, a sort of *Konzertstück*. While composing the music, I had a definite vision of a clown suddenly let loose, who, with a cascade of devilish arpeggios exasperates the orchestra, which in its turn replies to him in menacing fanfares. There is a terrible brawl ending in a dolorous

and pathetic *débâcle* of the poor clown. This bizarre piece finished. I sought for hours, walking by the lake of Geneva, a title that would express in one word the character of my music . . . One day, I started with joy. *Petrouchka!* The eternal and unlucky hero of all the fairs in all countries! I had found my title!"

Diaghilev produced this ballet at the Châtelet Theatre, Paris, on June 13th 1911. It was an amazing success, and for years afterwards, *Petrouchka* was held up as one of the outstanding achievements in modern music. Stravinsky's use of the chord of C-major against F-sharp-minor was in those days considered a very daring experiment—though some say it was an accident—and was quite probably the start of the craze for polytonality.

More surprises followed in his third ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps*, a remarkable work depicting springtime scenes in the old pagan Russia, which he completed at Clarens, Switzerland, in March 1913. It was first presented by Diaghilev at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées on the following May 29th, but even the reputation of the eminent impresario and his talented dancers did not prevent the French audience from showing its disapproval of what they considered to be a freakish exhibition of modernism. The scene is described by Jean Cocteau:<sup>1</sup> "*Le Sacre du Printemps* was performed in a new theatre, too comfortable and too cold for a public accustomed to rub elbows in red and golden velvet. I do not mean to say that *Le Sacre* would have had a more polite reception in a less pretentious theatre; but this luxurious house symbolized the error of pitching a work of power and youth at a decadent public. An exhausted audience, seated amid the Louis XVI garlands, Venetian gondolas, soft divans and cushions . . . played the rôle it had to play. It laughed, spat, hissed and imitated animal cries. They might have eventually tired themselves of that if it had not been for the crowd of aesthetes and a few musicians who, carried away by an excess of zeal, insulted the people and even pushed them out of their boxes. The riot degenerated into a free fight. Standing in her box, her diadem askew, the old Countess de Pourtales brandished her fan and shouted until she was red in the face 'It is the first time in sixty years that anyone has dared to make a fool of me.' The good lady was sincere: she thought it was a mystification."

In his autobiography, Stravinsky tells us: "I left the theatre after the first few bars of the prelude, which evoked laughter and mockery. I was outraged. These outbursts, at first isolated, soon became general and provoked counter-protests, quickly

<sup>1</sup> *Le Rappel à l'ordre.*

developing into a terrible uproar. During the entire performance I remained behind the scenes with Nijinsky . . . he was furious and ready to jump at any moment on the stage and start a riot. Diaghilev, intending to stop the disturbance, gave orders to the electricians to turn the lights off and on."

The music of *Le Sacre du Printemps* was criticized by Pierre Lalo in *Le Temps* thus: "The cult of the false note has never been practised with such zeal and persistence . . . whatever note you expect, it is never that one which comes, but the next one to it; whatever chord may seem to be involved by a preceding chord, it is always another that follows . . . and often gives an impression of sharp and almost atrocious discord."

Stravinsky, who had been living in France, Italy and Switzerland most of the time then made a return visit to Russia and brought back with him a number of Russian folksongs which he used in his later works. During the Great War he lived in Switzerland.

In the spring of 1917, Diaghilev went to Rome to give a gala performance with his Russian Ballet. As the Czar had recently abdicated, the programme could not be opened in the customary manner with the old Russian national anthem, so he decided to use a Russian folksong, and chose *The Song of the Volga Boatmen*. At his request, Stravinsky orchestrated it, working all through the night at the piano in Lord Berners' apartment. The song was played on April 9th 1917, and afterwards became famous all over the world.

As the war dragged on, Diaghilev was compelled to suspend the activities of the Russian Ballet, and as most of the Swiss theatres were unable to stage elaborate productions, Stravinsky found little demand for his work. He was discussing the situation with his friend Ramuz one day when they hit upon the idea of writing something that would require only a few actors and half-a-dozen instrumentalists. They chose a Russian tale about a soldier who played the violin and deserted from the army, and set it to music as *L'Histoire du Soldat*. It was first performed at Lausanne in the autumn of 1918.

At that time, the early forms of jazz had already come from America, and Stravinsky began to experiment with them. On the morning of the Armistice a work for eleven instruments called *Ragtime* was completed. It is of no great importance, however.

Another experiment made soon after the war was the writing of a ballet based on the music of Pergolesi, and thus originated the

one-act classical ballet suite *Pulcinella*, which Diaghilev produced at the Paris Opéra in May 1920.

The death of Claude Debussy in 1918 had moved Stravinsky to write a *Symphony for Wind Instruments*. This was completed early in 1921 and first performed at a concert of Russian music in London under the conductorship of Koussevitsky on June 10th 1921. *The Times* dismissed the work as "nothing but senseless ugliness," but Stravinsky explained that it had not been written to gratify or stimulate the passions: "It is an austere ceremony which revolves in brief litanies among different families of homogeneous instruments."

*Mavra* was Stravinsky's last composition based on Russian themes. This *opéra bouffe* in one act, after Pushkin, was produced by Diaghilev in June 1922 with *Le Renard*, a little burlesque opera which Stravinsky had written in 1917. He then turned his attention to "absolute" music, and wrote an Octet for wind instruments in 1923, and in the following year completed a Concerto for piano and wood-wind instruments in three movements and in strictly classical form.

In the first week of 1925 Stravinsky went to America for the first time. By conducting concerts of his own works and occasionally appearing as solo pianist he encouraged more and more people to take an interest in his compositions. Towards the end of that year he decided that he would like to write an opera or oratorio to a libretto in one of the dead languages—Latin for instance, and asked Jean Cocteau to prepare the text of a subject of ancient tragedy. In this he wanted the principal singers to be quite motionless, and the chorus to be placed behind a bas-relief with only their faces visible. Thus originated his oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (after Sophocles), which he completed in May 1927 and had performed as a concert work by Diaghilev's company in Paris at the end of that month.

Then followed the ballet *Appollon Musagètes* (commissioned by the Library of Congress, Washington) which is on classical lines in the form of an ancient dance suite; *Le Baiser de la Fée* "an allegorical ballet in four scenes inspired by the muse of Tschaikovsky"; and the more popular *Capriccio* for piano and orchestra, which was first performed in Paris by the Orchestre Symphonique under Ansermet on December 6th 1929. Of this, the composer says "This form gave me the possibility of arranging my music in juxtaposition of episodes in varied genres which

succeed each other and, by their nature, impart to the piece the capricious character from which it takes its name."

Early in 1930 he started work on his *Symphony of Psalms*, which he composed "to the glory of God" for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. This work is for chorus and orchestra minus the violins and violas, and as one would imagine, the general effect of the instrumental contribution is almost exactly like that of an organ. The work is in three linked movements, marked only by metronome indications. It was first performed in Brussels on December 13th of that year; the American *première* by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky following six days later.

After writing his Violin Concerto (for Samuel Dushkin) in 1931, and his pastoral suite for violin and piano, *Duo Concertant*, in the following year, he was asked by Mme. Ida Rubinstein to write the music for a poem by André Gide. He agreed, and met Gide at Wiesbaden. The poem was taken from the superb Homeric hymn to Demeter, and Stravinsky set to work on the music immediately. At the end of 1933 *Persephone* was finished, and on the following April 30th this "melodrama in three parts for orchestra, chorus and speaking voice" was given at the Paris Opéra under the baton of the composer. Before the performance Stravinsky declared in *Excelsior*: "I hold that music is given to us to create order, to carry us from an anarchical individual condition to a regulated condition, thoroughly conscious and provided with guarantees of enduring vitality . . . . . I warn the public that I loathe orchestral effects as a means of embellishment. I have long since renounced the futilities of *brío*. I dislike cajoling the public: it inconveniences me; . . . the crowd expects the artist to tear out his entrails and exhibit them. That is what is held to be the noblest expression of art, and called personality, individuality, temperament and so forth . . ." He then goes on to say that in *Persephone*: ". . . There is nothing to discuss or to criticize. One does not criticize anybody or anything that is functioning. A nose is not manufactured: a nose just *is*. Thus, too, is my art."

This rather stupid analogy certainly did nothing to help the critic Jean Chantavoine to digest the work. Writing in *Le Ménestrel*, he said "The music of *Persephone* is dry, dull, glum, lacks individual accent and expansion, and strikes me as a symbol of those abstract theories which would deprive man of all in him that is not

'social'—or in other words, all that is his own self: love, joy, caprices, preferences."

On the other hand *La Revue Musicale* swallowed it with relish: "The score is splendidly balanced, the choruses are superb, and some of them stand among the greatest things Stravinsky has ever given us. The austere, powerful music rises at times to great heights of noble emotion."

These criticisms are typical of the conflicting opinions that for the past ten years have been expressed by the critics. Some have insisted that Stravinsky's later works are his best, others believe that he has struck a bad patch, and one prominent English critic considers that Stravinsky's muse has become "dessicated." Personally, I can enjoy such early works as *The Firebird*, *Petrouchka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps* if I feel in the mood for them, but his later works do not inspire me, though I have a feeling that they represent a belated transitional stage in his career, and this is perhaps borne out by the fact that as I write I hear that Stravinsky is completing one or two works that will be "highly interesting" to those who have followed his artistic life. No true musician, amateur or otherwise, allows himself to be swayed by the opinions of music critics, and least of all by the preferences of musical biographers, so the reader will of course decide this matter for himself.

After the début of *Persephone*, Stravinsky decided to settle in France and become a French citizen. Then he completed his Concerto for two pianos, and made another visit to America, for which he wrote a ballet on a subject that he thought would appeal to some of his more sophisticated friends in the United States: a game of poker. This is called *The Card Party*, "a ballet in three deals," and was first produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, on April 29th 1937. *Modern Music* described it thus: "The scene is a card table at a gaming house, and dancers are members of the pack . . . The musical opening of each deal is a short processional . . . which introduces the shuffling of the pack. For the card play . . . there are group dances, solo variations and finales . . . The music is dry, brilliant, melodic and extremely complex in its rhythmic pattern, a synthesis of purely creative yet evocative passages, balanced by fragments definitely reminiscent of Rossini, Délibes, Johann Strauss, Ravel, Stravinsky's *Capriccio* and jazz in general." In *La Revue Musicale* we find: "Stravinsky nowadays refuses to use any pattern or colour not duly authenticated and vouched for by long usage.

*Jeu de Cartes*, being cheerful music, he follows in it the code of musical cheerfulness as established from the time of Haydn to the time of Rossini. The tone of the whole work is curiously indirect . . . It suggests to me the back of a tapestry, a maze of threads, knots, ridges and furrows, of which no living soul will ever behold the front."

Following the death of his wife in Paris on October 18th 1939, Stravinsky went to America and joined the staff of Harvard University. In March 1940 he married Vera Soudeikine at Bedford, Mass., and in the ensuing year applied for American citizenship. His principal works since the outbreak of the Second World War include the Symphony in C, written for the fiftieth anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. This was completed in August 1940 and first performed by them on the following November 7th. Other noteworthy works are his *Danses Concertantes*, first performed under his own direction at Los Angeles in February 1942, the *Dance for a Circus Ballet*, and the *Tango* for violin and piano.

The critics will never entirely agree upon the value of Stravinsky's work. Writing in *Rassegna Musicale*, Boris de Schloezer says: "Stravinsky always has a definite purpose and always selects the most suitable means of achieving it. The close relation between the means and the end accounts for his success. He has always done what he set out to do because he has never set out to achieve the impossible." It cannot be denied, however, that the brilliance of his more successful works is superficial, though he scarcely deserves the sharp attack made upon him by Cecil Gray in his book *Contemporary Music*:<sup>1</sup> "In short, he has demonstrably none of the qualities of musicianship, except in remarkable orchestral virtuosity, and nothing grows stale so quickly. It is only a condiment which stimulates the appetite without satisfying it. His orchestral colour does not arise out of the music, but is superimposed on it, laid on with a trowel. In short, no composer is less capable than he of writing music which can stand on its own legs unsupported by the complicated paraphernalia of stage scenery, costumes and dancing. That he of all people should claim to be regarded as a writer of pure music is one of the most remarkable examples of insolence and charlatanism in the history of art; that he should be accepted as one is only another instance of the melancholy stupidity and gullibility of the musical public." The element of truth in these charges tends, I think, to make the criticism all the more unkind.

<sup>1</sup> Oxford University Press.





Stravinsky is a smallish man with a rather long face that suggests an almost melancholy pensiveness: one can scarcely associate him with a work such as *Petrouchka*. He has an ability to control his feelings quite unusual in musicians: he never gets ruffled—at least, if he does he never shows it—even when an ill-mannered audience becomes abusive. One of his pet aversions is the type of virtuoso conductor who insists upon stamping his own personality upon the music he directs, and who ignores a composer's wishes even when they are patent in gramophone records made under the composer's personal direction.

He does not consider that he is "modern" and denies that he has any interest in musical fantasticism. "I am incapable of understanding atonal music" he declares, "My ideas come from my music: not my music from my ideas." Beethoven and Wagner, he considers, possessed no great creative powers, but he admires the work of Handel, Bach, Mozart, Donizetti and Bellini, and is particularly interested in the development of the modern French school of composers.

Stravinsky has four children: Fedor, a talented painter; Sviatoslav<sup>1</sup>, an accomplished pianist; Milena, who possesses an excellent singing voice; and Milka, the youngest.

<sup>1</sup> Generally known as Sulimo.